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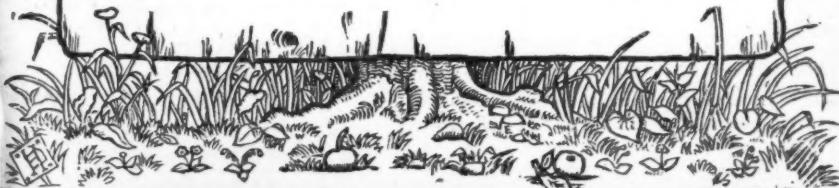
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MARCH 1887.

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By H. RIDER HAGGARD, AUTHOR OF 'SHE,'
'KING SOLOMON'S MINES,' &c.

Ex Africa semper aliquid novi.

CHAPTER VII.

A SLAUGHTER GRIM AND GREAT.

THEN came a pause, and we stood there in the chilly silent darkness waiting till the moment came to start. It was, perhaps, the most trying time of all—that slow, slow quarter of an hour. The minutes seemed to drag along with leaden feet, and the quiet, the solemn hush, that brooded over all—big, as it were with a coming fate, was most oppressive to the spirits. I once remember having to get up before dawn to see a man hanged, and I then went through a very similar set of sensations, only in the present instance my feelings were animated by that more vivid and personal element which naturally appertains rather to the person to be operated on than to the most sympathetic spectator. The solemn faces of the men, well aware that the short passage of an hour would mean for some, and perhaps all of them the last great passage to the unknown or oblivion; the bated whispers in which they spoke; even Sir Henry's continuous and

thoughtful examination of his woodcutter's axe and the fidgety way in which Good kept polishing his eyeglass all told the same tale of nerves stretched pretty nigh to breaking point. Only Umslopogaas, leaning as usual upon Inkosi-kaas and taking an occasional pinch of snuff, was to all appearance perfectly and completely unmoved. Nothing could touch his iron nerves.

The moon went down, for a long while she had been getting nearer and nearer to the horizon, now she finally sank and left the world in darkness save for a faint grey tinge in the Eastern sky that palely heralded the coming dawn.

Mr. Mackenzie stood, watch in hand, his wife clinging to his arm and striving to stifle her sobs.

'Twenty minutes to four,' he said, 'it ought to be light enough to attack at twenty minutes past four. Captain Good had better be moving, he will want three or four minutes' start.'

Good gave one final polish to his eyeglass, nodded to us in a jocular sort of way—which I could not help feeling it must have cost him something to muster up—and, ever polite, took off his steel-lined cap to Mrs. Mackenzie and started for his position at the head of the kraal, to reach which he had to make a detour by some paths known to the natives.

Just then one of the boys came in and reported that everybody in the Masai camp, with the exception of the two sentries who were walking up and down in front of the respective entrances, appeared to be fast asleep. Then the rest of us took the road. First came the guide, then Sir Henry, Umslopogaas, the Wakwafi Askari, and Mr. Mackenzie's two mission natives armed with long spears and shields. I followed immediately after with Alphonse and five natives all armed with guns, and Mr. Mackenzie brought up the rear with the six remaining natives.

The cattle kraal where the Masai were camped lay at the foot of the hill on which the house stood, or, roughly speaking, about eight hundred yards from the Mission buildings. The first five hundred yards of this distance we traversed quietly indeed, but at a good pace; after that we crept on as silently as a leopard on his prey, gliding like ghosts from bush to bush and stone to stone. When I had gone a little way I chanced to look behind me, and saw the redoubtable Alphonse staggering along with white face and trembling knees, and his rifle, which was at full cock, pointed directly at the small of my back. Having halted and carefully put the rifle at 'safety,' we started again, and all went well till we

were within one hundred yards or so of the kraal, when his teeth began to chatter in the most aggressive way.

'If you don't stop that I will kill you,' I whispered savagely; for the idea of having all our lives sacrificed to a tooth-chattering French cook was too much for me. I began to fear that he would betray us, and heartily wished we had left him behind.

'But, monsieur, I cannot help it,' he answered; 'it is the cold.'

Here was a dilemma, but fortunately I devised a plan. In the pocket of the coat I had on was a small piece of dirty rag that I had used some time before to clean a gun with. 'Put this in your mouth,' I whispered again, giving him the rag; 'and if I hear another sound you are a dead man.' I knew that that would stifle the clatter of his ivories. I must have looked as if I meant what I said, for he instantly obeyed me and continued his journey with an oily corner of rag hanging down his chin.

Then we crept on again.

At last we were within fifty yards of the kraal. Between us and it was an open space of sloping grass with only one mimosa bush and a couple of tussocks of a sort of thistle for cover. We were still hidden in fairly thick bush. It was beginning to grow light. The stars had paled and a kind of sickly gleam played about the east and was reflected on the earth. We could see the outline of the kraal clearly enough, and could also make out the faint glimmer of the dying embers of the Masai camp fires. We halted and watched, for the sentry we knew was posted at the opening. Presently he appeared, a fine tall fellow, walking idly up and down within five paces of the thorn-stopped entrance. We had hoped to catch him napping, but it was not to be. He seemed particularly wide awake. If we could not kill that man, and kill him silently, we were lost. There we crouched and watched him. Presently Umslopogaas, who was a few paces ahead of me, turned and made a sign, and next second I saw him go down on his stomach like a snake, and taking an opportunity when the sentry's head was turned, begin to work his way through the grass without a sound.

The unconscious sentry commenced to hum a little tune, and Umslopogaas crept on. He reached the shelter of the mimosa bush unperceived and there waited. Still the sentry walked up and down. Presently he turned and looked over the wall into the camp. Instantly the human snake who was stalking him glided on ten yards and got behind one of the tussocks of the thistle-like plant, reaching it as the Elmoran turned again. As he

turned his eye fell upon this patch of thistles and it seemed to strike him that it did not look quite right. He advanced a pace towards it—halted, yawned, stooped down, picked up a little pebble and threw it at it. It hit Umslopogaas upon the head, luckily not upon the armour-shirt. Had it done so the clink would have betrayed us. Luckily, too, the shirt was browned and not bright steel which would certainly have been detected. Apparently satisfied that there was nothing wrong he then gave over his investigations and contented himself with leaning on his spear and standing gazing idly at the tuft. For at least three minutes did he stand thus, plunged apparently in a gentle reverie, and there we lay in the last extremity of anxiety, expecting every moment that we should be discovered or that some untoward accident would happen. I could hear Alphonse's teeth going like anything on the oiled rag, and turning my head round made an awful face at him. But I am bound to state that my own heart was at much the same game as the Frenchman's castanets, while the perspiration was pouring from my body, causing the wash-leather-lined shirt to stick to me unpleasantly, and altogether I was in the pitiable state known by schoolboys as a 'blue funk.'

At last the ordeal came to an end. The sentry glanced at the east, and appeared to note with satisfaction that his period of duty was coming to an end—as indeed it was, once and for all—for he rubbed his hands and began to walk again briskly, to warm himself.

The moment his back was turned the long black snake glided on again, and reached the other thistle tuft, which was within a couple of paces of his return beat.

Back came the sentry and strolled right past the tuft, utterly unconscious of the presence that was crouching behind it. Had he looked down he could scarcely have failed to see, but he did not do so.

He passed, and then his hidden enemy erected himself, and with outstretched hand followed in his tracks.

A moment more, and, just as the Elmoran was about to turn, the great Zulu made a spring, and in the growing light we could see the long lean hands close round the Masai's throat. Then followed a convulsive twining of the two dark bodies, and in another second I saw the Masai's head bent back, and heard a sharp crack, something like that of a dry twig snapping, and he fell down upon the ground, his limbs moving spasmodically.

Umslopogaas had put out all his iron strength and broken the warrior's neck.

For a moment he knelt upon his victim, still gripping his throat till he was sure that there was nothing more to fear from him, and then he rose and beckoned to us to advance, which we did on all fours, like a colony of huge apes. On reaching the kraal we saw that the Masai had still further choked this entrance, which was about ten feet wide—no doubt in order to guard against attack—by dragging four or five tops of mimosa trees up to it. So much the better for us, I reflected; the more obstruction there was the slower would they be able to come through. Here we separated; Mackenzie and his party creeping up under the shadow of the wall to the left, while Sir Henry and Umslopogaas took their stations one on each side of the thorn fence, the two spearmen and the Askari lying down in front of it. I and my men crept on up the right side of the kraal, which was about fifty paces long.

When I was two-thirds up I halted, and placed my men at distances of four paces from one another, keeping Alphonse close to me, however. Then I peeped for the first time over the wall. It was getting fairly light now, and the first thing I saw was the white donkey, exactly opposite to me, and close by it I could make out little Flossie's pale face, sitting as the lad had described, some ten paces from the wall. Round her lay many warriors, sleeping. At distances all over the surface of the kraal were the remains of fires, round each of which slept some five-and-twenty Masai, for the most part gorged with food. Now and then a man would raise himself, yawn, and look at the east, which had now turned primrose; but none got up. I determined to wait another five minutes, both to allow the light to increase, so that we could make better shooting, and to give Good and his party—of whom I could see or hear nothing—every opportunity to make ready.

The quiet dawn commenced to throw her ever-widening mantle over plain and forest and river—mighty Kenia, wrapped in the silence of eternal snows, looked out across the earth—till presently a beam from the unrisen sun lit upon his heaven-kissing crest and purpled it with blood; the sky above grew blue, and tender as a mother's smile; a bird began to pipe his morning song, and a little breeze passing through the bush shook down the dewdrops in millions to refresh the waking world. Everywhere was peace and the happiness of arising strength, everywhere save in the heart of cruel man!

Suddenly, just as I was nerving myself for the signal, having already selected my man on whom I meant to open fire—a great fellow sprawling on the ground within three feet of little Flossie—Alphonse's teeth began to chatter again like the hoofs of a galloping giraffe, making a great noise in the silence. His rag had dropped out in the agitation of his mind. Instantly a Masai within three paces of us woke, and, sitting up, gazed about him, looking for the cause of the sound. Moved beyond myself, I brought the butt-end of my rifle down on to the pit of the Frenchman's stomach. This stopped his chattering; but, as he doubled up, he managed to let off his gun in such a manner that the bullet passed within an inch of my head.

There was no need for a signal now. From both sides of the kraal broke out a waving line of fire, in which I myself joined, managing with a snap shot to knock over my Masai by Flossie, just as he was jumping up. Then from the top end of the kraal there rang an awful yell, in which I rejoiced to recognise Good's piercing note rising clear and shrill above the din, and in another second followed such a scene as I have never seen before nor shall again. With an universal howl of terror and fury the brawny crowd of savages within the kraal sprang to their feet, many of them to fall again beneath our well-directed hail of lead before they had moved a yard. For a moment they stood undecided, and then hearing the cries and curses that rose unceasingly from the top end of the kraal, and bewildered by the storm of bullets, they as by one impulse rushed down towards the thorn-stopped entrance. As they went we kept pouring our fire with terrible effect into the thickening mob as fast as we could load. I had emptied my repeater of the ten shots it contained and was just beginning to slip in some more when I bethought me of little Flossie. Looking up, I saw that the white donkey was lying kicking, having been knocked over either by one of our bullets or a Masai spear-thrust. There were no living Masai near, but the black nurse was on her feet and with a spear cutting the rope that bound Flossie's feet. Next second she ran to the wall of the kraal and began to climb over it, an example which the little girl followed. But Flossie was evidently very stiff and cramped, and could only go slowly, and as she went two Masai flying down the kraal caught sight of her and rushed towards her to kill her. The first fellow came up just as the poor little girl, after a desperate effort to climb the wall, fell back into the kraal. Up flashed the great spear, and as it did so a bullet from my rifle

found its home in the holder's ribs, and over he went like a shot rabbit. But behind him was the other man, and, alas, I had only that one cartridge in the magazine ! Flossie had scrambled to her feet and was facing the second man, who was advancing with raised spear. I turned my head aside and felt sick as death. I could not bear to see him stab her. Glancing up again, to my surprise I saw the Masai's spear lying on the ground, while the man himself was staggering about with both hands to his head. Suddenly I saw a puff of smoke, proceeding apparently from Flossie, and the man fell down headlong. Then I remembered the Derringer pistol she carried, and saw that she had fired both barrels of it at him, thereby saving her life. In another instant she had made an effort, and assisted by the nurse, who was lying on the top, had scrambled over the wall, and I knew that she was, comparatively speaking, safe.

All this takes some time to tell, but I do not suppose that it took more than fifteen seconds to enact. I soon got the magazine of the repeater filled again with cartridges, and once more opened fire, not on the seething black mass which was gathering at the end of the kraal, but on fugitives who bethought them to climb the wall. I picked off several of these men, moving down towards the end of the kraal as I did so, and arriving at the corner, or rather the bend of the oval, in time to see, and by means of my rifle to assist in, the mighty struggle that took place there.

By this time some two hundred Masai—allowing that we had up to the present accounted for fifty—had gathered together in front of the thorn-stopped entrance, driven thither by the spears of Good's men, whom they doubtless supposed were a large force instead of being but ten strong. For some reason it never occurred to them to try and rush the wall, which they could have scrambled over with comparative ease ; they all made for the fence, which was really a strongly interwoven fortification. With a bound the first warrior went at it, and even before he touched the ground on the other side I saw Sir Henry's great axe swing up and fall with awful force upon his feather head-piece, and he sank into the middle of the thorns. Then with a yell and a crash they began to break through somehow, and ever as they came the great axe swung and Inkosi-kaas flashed and they fell dead one by one, each man thus helping to build up a barrier against his fellows. Those who escaped the axes of the pair fell at the hands of the Askari and the two Mission Kafirs, and those who

passed scatheless from them were brought low by my own and Mackenzie's fire.

Faster and more furious grew the fighting. Single Masai would spring upon the dead bodies of their comrades, and engage one or other of the axemen with their long spears ; but, thanks chiefly to the mail shirts, the result was always the same. Presently there was a great swing of the axe, a sound of crashing bones, and another dead Masai. That is, if the man was engaged with Sir Henry. If it was Umslopogaas that he fought with the result indeed would be the same, but it would be differently attained. It was but rarely that the Zulu used the crashing double-handed stroke ; on the contrary, he did little more than tap continually at his adversary's head, pecking at it with the pole-axe end of the axe as a woodpecker¹ pecks at rotten wood. Presently a peck would go home, and his enemy would drop down with a neat little circular hole in his forehead or skull, exactly similar to that which a cheese-scoop makes in a cheese. He never used the broad blade of the axe except when hard pressed, or when striking at a shield. He told me afterwards that he did not consider it sportsmanlike.

Good and his men were quite close by now, and our people had to cease firing into the mass for fear of killing some of them (as it was, one of them was slain in this way). Mad and desperate with fear, the Masai by a frantic effort burst through the thorn fence and piled-up dead, and, sweeping Curtis, Umslopogaas, and the other three before them, broke into the open. And now it was that we began to lose men fast. Down went our poor Askari who was armed with the axe, a great spear standing out a foot behind his back ; and before long the two spearmen who had stood with him went down too, dying fighting like tigers ; and others of our party shared their fate. For a moment I feared the fight was lost—certainly it trembled in the balance. I shouted to my men to cast down their rifles, and to take spears and throw themselves into the *mélée*. They obeyed, their blood being now thoroughly up, and Mr. Mackenzie's people followed their example.

This move had a momentary good result, but still the fight hung in the balance.

Our people fought magnificently, hurling themselves upon the

¹ As I think I have already said, one of Umslopogaas's Zulu names was the 'Woodpecker.' I could never make out why he was called so until I saw him in action with Inkosi-kaas, when I at once recognised the resemblance.—A.Q.

dark mass of Elmoran, hewing, thrusting, slaying, and being slain. And ever above the din rose Good's awful yell of encouragement as he plunged, eyeglass and all, to wherever the fight was thickest; and ever, with an almost machine-like regularity, the two axes rose and fell, carrying death and disablement at every stroke. But I could see that the strain was beginning to tell upon Sir Henry, who was bleeding from several flesh wounds: his breath was coming in gasps, and the veins stood out on his forehead like blue and knotted cords. Even Umslopoagaas, man of iron that he was, was hard pressed. I noticed that he had given up 'woodpecking,' and was now using the broad blade of Inkosikaas, 'browning' his enemy wherever he could hit him, instead of drilling scientific holes in his head. I myself did not go into the *mélée*, but hovered outside like the swift 'back' in a football scrimmage, putting a bullet through a Masai whenever I got a chance. I was more use so. I fired forty-nine cartridges that morning, and I did not miss many shots.

Presently, do as we would, the beam of the balance began to rise against us. We had not more than fifteen or sixteen effectives left now, and the Masai had at least fifty. Of course if they had kept their heads, and shaken themselves together, they could soon have made an end of the matter; but that is just what they did not do, not having yet recovered from their start, and some of them having actually fled from their sleeping-places without their weapons. Still by now many individuals were fighting with their normal courage and discretion, and this alone was sufficient to defeat us. To make matters worse just then, when Mackenzie's rifle was empty, a brawny savage armed with a 'sime' or sword, made a rush for him. The clergyman flung down his gun, and drawing his huge carver from his elastic belt (his revolver had dropped out in the fight), they closed in desperate struggle. It really was a sight to see that good but angular man go in—coat-tails, broad-brimmed hat, carving-knife, and all. They say that nobody is so bitter as an apostate, so, on the same principle, for fighting purposes at a pinch commend me to a man of peace. At any rate, Mackenzie's play with the carving-knife was something beautiful, though I fear that the Society of Friends would not have approved of this way of 'converting the heathen.' Presently, locked in a close embrace, missionary and Masai rolled on to the ground behind the wall, and for some time I, being amply occupied with my own affairs, and in keeping my skin from

being pricked, remained in ignorance of his fate or how the duel had ended.

To and fro surged the fight, slowly turning round like the vortex of a human whirlpool, and things began to look very bad for us. Just then, however, a fortunate thing happened. Umslopogaas, either by accident or design, broke out of the ring and engaged a warrior at some few paces from it. As he did so, another man ran up and struck him with all his force between the shoulders with his great spear, which, falling on the tough steel shirt, failed to pierce it and rebounded. For a moment the man stared aghast—protective armour being unknown among these tribes—and then he yelled out at the top of his voice—

‘*They are devils—bewitched, bewitched!*’ And seized by a sudden panic, he threw down his spear, and began to fly. I cut short his career with a bullet, and Umslopogaas brained his man, and then the panic spread to the others.

‘*Bewitched, bewitched!*’ they cried, and tried to escape in every direction, utterly demoralised and broken-spirited, for the most part even throwing down their shields and spears.

On the last scene of that dreadful fight I need not dwell. It was a slaughter great and grim, in which no quarter was asked or given. One incident, however, is worth detailing. Just as I was hoping that it was all done with, suddenly from under a heap of slain where he had been hiding, an unwounded warrior sprang up, and, clearing the piles of dying and dead like an antelope, sped like the wind up the kraal towards the spot where I was standing at the moment. But he was not alone, for Umslopogaas came gliding on his tracks with the peculiar swallow-like motion for which he was noted, and as they neared me, I recognised in the Masai the herald of the previous night. Finding that, run as he would, his pursuer was gaining on him, the man halted and turned round to give battle. Umslopogaas also pulled up.

‘Ah, ah,’ he cried, in mockery, to the Elmoran, ‘it is thou whom I talked with last night—the Lygonani, the Herald, the capturer of little girls—he who would kill a little girl. And thou didst hope to stand man to man and face to face with an Induna of the tribe of the Maquilisini, of the people of the Amazulu? Behold, thy prayer is granted! And I did swear to hew thee limb from limb, thou insolent dog. Behold, I will do it even now!’

The Masai ground his teeth with fury, and charged at the Zulu with his spear. As he came, Umslopogaas deftly stepped aside, and swinging Inkosi-kaas high above his head with both

hands, brought the broad blade down with such fearful force from behind upon the Masai's shoulder just where the neck is set into the frame, that its razor edge shore right through bone and flesh and muscle, almost severing the head and one arm from the body.

'*Ou!*' ejaculated Umslopogaas, contemplating the corpse of his foe; 'I have kept my word. It was a good stroke.'

CHAPTER VIII.

ALPHONSE EXPLAINS.

AND so the fight was ended. On turning from this shocking scene it suddenly struck me that I had seen nothing of Alphonse since the moment, some twenty minutes before—for though this fight has taken a long while to describe, it did not take long in reality—when I had been forced to hit him in the wind with the result of nearly getting myself shot. Fearing that the poor little man had perished in the battle I began to hunt about among the dead for his body, but, not being able either to see or hear anything of it, I concluded that he must have survived, and walked down the side of the kraal where we had first taken our stand, calling him by name. Now some fifteen paces back from the kraal wall stood a very ancient tree of the banyan species. So ancient was it, that all the inside had in the course of ages decayed away, leaving nothing but a shell of bark.

'Alphonse,' I called, as I walked down the wall, 'Alphonse!'

'Oui, monsieur,' answered a voice. 'Here am I.'

I looked round but could see nobody. 'Where?' I cried.

'Here am I, monsieur, in the tree.'

I looked, and there, peering out of a hole in the trunk of the banyan about five feet from the ground, I saw a pale face and a pair of large mustachios, one clipped short and the other as lamentably out of curl as the tail of a newly whipped pug. Then, for the first time, I realised what I had suspected before—namely, that Alphonse was an arrant coward. I walked up to him. 'Come out of that hole,' I said.

'Is it finished, monsieur?' he asked anxiously; 'quite finished? Ah, the horrors I have undergone, and the prayers I have uttered!'

'Come out, you little skunk,' I said, for I did not feel amiable; 'it is all over.'

‘So, monsieur, then my prayers have prevailed? I emerge,’ and he did.

As we were walking down together to join the others, who were gathered in a group by the wide entrance to the kraal, which now resembled a veritable charnel-house, a Masai, who had escaped so far and been hiding under a bush, suddenly sprang up and charged furiously at us. Off went Alphonse with a howl of terror, and after him flew the Masai, bent upon doing some execution before he died. He soon overtook the poor little Frenchman, and would have finished him then and there had I not, just as Alphonse made a last agonised double in the vain hope of avoiding the yard of steel that was flashing in his immediate rear, managed to plant a bullet between the Elmoran’s broad shoulders, which brought matters to a satisfactory conclusion so far as the Frenchman was concerned. But just then he tripped and fell flat, and the body of the Masai fell right on the top of him, moving convulsively in the death struggle. Thereupon there arose such a series of piercing howls that I concluded that before he died the savage must have managed to skewer poor Alphonse. I ran up in a hurry and pulled the Masai off, and there beneath him lay Alphonse covered with blood and jerking himself about like a galvanised frog. Poor fellow! thought I, he is done for, and kneeling down by him I began to search for his wound as well as his struggles would allow.

‘Oh, the hole in my back!’ he yelled. ‘I am murdered. I am dead. Oh, Annette!’

I searched again, but could see no wound. Then the truth dawned on me—the man was frightened, not hurt.

‘Get up,’ I shouted, ‘get up. Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? You are not touched.’

Thereupon he rose, not a penny the worse. ‘But, monsieur, I thought I was,’ he said apologetically; ‘I did not know that I had conquered.’ Then, giving the body of the Masai a kick, he ejaculated triumphantly, ‘Ah, dog of a black savage, thou art dead; what victory?’

Thoroughly disgusted, I left Alphonse to look after himself, which he did by following me like a shadow, and proceeded to join the others by the large entrance. The first thing that I saw was Mackenzie, seated on a stone with a handkerchief twisted round his thigh, from which he was bleeding freely, having, indeed, received a spear-thrust that passed right through it, and still holding in his hand his favourite carving-knife now covered

with blood and bent nearly double, from which I gathered that he had been successful in his rough and tumble with the Elmoran.

'Ah, Quatermain!' he sang out in a trembling, excited voice, 'so we have conquered; but it is a sorry sight, a sorry sight;' and then breaking into broad Scotch and glancing at the bent knife in his hand, 'It greets me sair to hae bent my best carver on the breast-bane of a savage,' and he laughed hysterically. Poor fellow, what between his wound and the killing excitement he had undergone his nerves were much shaken, and no wonder! It is hard upon a man of peace and kindly heart to be called upon to join in such a gruesome business. But there, fate puts us sometimes into very ironical positions!

At the kraal entrance the scene was a strange one. The slaughter was over by now, and the wounded men had been put out of their pain, for no quarter had been given. The bush-closed entrance was trampled flat, and in place of bushes it was filled with the bodies of dead men. Dead men, everywhere dead men—they lay about in knots, they were flung by ones and twos in every position upon the open spaces, for all the world like the people on the grass in one of the London parks on a particularly hot Sunday in August. In front of this entrance, on a space which had been cleared of dead and of the shields and spears which were scattered in all directions as they had fallen or been thrown from the hands of their owners, stood and lay the survivors of the awful struggle, and at their feet were four wounded men. We had gone into the fight thirty strong, and of the thirty but fifteen remained alive, and five of them (including Mr. Mackenzie) were wounded, two mortally. Of those who held the entrance, Curtis and the Zulu alone remained. Good had lost five men killed, I had lost two killed, and Mackenzie no less than five out of the six with him. As for the survivors they were, with the exception of myself who had never come to close quarters, red from head to foot—Sir Henry's armour might have been painted that colour—and utterly exhausted, except Umslopoagaas, who, as he stood on a little mound above a heap of dead, leaning as usual upon his axe, did not seem particularly distressed, although the skin over the hole in his head palpitated violently.

'Ah, Macumazahn!' he said to me as I limped up, feeling very sick, 'I told thee that it would be a good fight, and it has. Never have I seen a better, or one more bravely fought. As for this iron shirt, surely it is "tagati" [bewitched]; nothing could pierce it.

Had it not been for the garment I should have been *there*,' and he nodded towards the great pile of dead men beneath him.

'I give it thee; thou art a gallant man,' said Sir Henry, briefly.

'Koos!' answered the Zulu, deeply pleased both at the gift and the compliment. 'Thou, too, Incubu, didst bear thyself as a man, but I must give thee some lessons with the axe; thou dost waste thy strength.'

Just then Mackenzie asked about Flossie, and we were all greatly relieved when one of the men said he had seen her flying towards the house with the nurse. Then bearing such of the wounded as could be moved at the moment with us, we slowly made our way towards the Mission-house, spent with toil and bloodshed, but with the glorious sense of victory against overwhelming odds glowing in our hearts. We had saved the life of the little maid, and taught the Masai of those parts a lesson that they will not forget for ten years—but at what a cost!

Painfully we made our way up the hill which, but a little more than an hour before, we had descended under such different circumstances. At the gate of the wall stood Mrs. Mackenzie waiting for us. When her eyes fell upon us, however, she shrieked out, and covered her face with her hands, crying, 'Horrible, horrible!' Nor were her fears allayed when she discovered her worthy husband being borne upon an improvised stretcher; but her doubts as to the nature of his injury were soon set at rest. Then when in a few brief words I had told her the upshot of the struggle (of which Flossie, who had arrived in safety, had been able to explain something) she came up to me and solemnly kissed me on the forehead.

'God bless you all, Mr. Quatermain; you have saved my child's life,' she said simply.

Then we went in and got our clothes off and doctored our wounds; I am glad to say I had none, and Sir Henry's and Good's were, thanks to those invaluable chain shirts, of a comparatively harmless nature, and to be dealt with by means of a few stitches and sticking-plaster. Mackenzie's, however, was serious, though fortunately the spear had not severed any large artery. After that we had a bath, and oh, what a luxury it was! and having clad ourselves in ordinary clothes, proceeded to the dining-room, where breakfast was set as usual. It was curious sitting down there, drinking tea and eating toast in an ordinary nineteenth-century sort of a way just as though we had not employed the early hours

in a regular primitive hand-to-hand middle-ages kind of struggle. As Good said, the whole thing seemed more as though one had had a bad nightmare just before being called, than as a deed done. When we were finishing our breakfast the door opened, and in came little Flossie, very pale and tottery, but quite unhurt. She kissed us all and thanked us. I congratulated her on the presence of mind she had shown in shooting the Masai with her Derringer pistol, and thereby saving her own life.

'Oh, don't talk of it!' she said, beginning to cry hysterically; 'I shall never forget his face as he went turning round and round, never—I can see it now.'

I advised her to go to bed and get some sleep, which she did, and awoke in the evening quite recovered, so far as her strength was concerned. It struck me as an odd thing that a girl who could find the nerve to shoot a huge black ruffian rushing to kill her with a spear should have been so affected at the thought of it afterwards; but it is, after all, characteristic of the sex. Poor Flossie! I fear that her nerves will not get over that night in the Masai camp for many a long year. She told me afterwards that it was the suspense that was so awful, having to sit there hour after hour through the livelong night utterly ignorant as to whether or no any attempt was to be made to rescue her. She said that on the whole she did not expect it, knowing how few there were of us, and how many of the Masai—who, by the way, came continually to stare at her, most of them never having seen a white person before, and handled her arms and hair with their filthy paws. She said also that she had made up her mind that if she saw no signs of succour by the time the first rays of the rising sun reached the kraal she would kill herself with the pistol, for the nurse had heard the Lygonani say that they were to be tortured to death as soon as the sun was up if one of the white men did not come in their place. It was an awful resolution to have to take, but she meant to act on it, and I have little doubt but what she would have done so. Although she was at an age when in England girls are in the schoolroom and come down to dessert, this 'daughter of the wilderness' had more courage, discretion, and power of mind than many a woman of mature age nurtured in idleness and luxury, with minds carefully drilled and educated out of any originality or self-resource that nature may have endowed them with.

When breakfast was over we all turned in and had a good sleep, only getting up in time for dinner; after which meal we

once more adjourned, together with all the available population—men, women, youths, and girls—to the scene of the morning's slaughter, our object being to bury our own dead and get rid of the Masai by flinging them into the Tana River, which ran within fifty yards of the kraal. On reaching the spot we disturbed thousands upon thousands of vultures and a sort of brown bush eagle, which had been flocking to the feast from miles and miles away. Often have I watched these great and repulsive birds, and marvelled at the extraordinary speed with which they arrive on a scene of slaughter. A buck falls to your rifle, and within a minute high in the blue ether appears a speck that gradually grows into a vulture, then another, and another. I have heard many theories advanced to account for the wonderful power of perception nature has given these birds. My own, founded on a good deal of observation, is that the vultures, gifted as they are with powers of sight greater than those given by the most powerful glass, quarter out the heavens among themselves, and hanging in mid-air at a vast height—probably from two to three miles above the earth—keep watch, each of them, over an enormous stretch of country. Presently one of them spies food, and instantly begins to sink towards it. Thereon his next neighbour in the airy heights sailing leisurely through the blue gulf, at a distance perhaps of some miles, follows his example, knowing that food has been sighted. Down he goes, and all the vultures within sight of him follow after, and so do all those in sight of them. In this way the vultures for twenty miles round can be summoned to the feast in a few minutes.

We buried our dead in solemn silence, Good being selected to read the Burial Service over them (in the absence of Mr. MacKenzie, confined to bed), as he was generally allowed to possess the best voice and most impressive manner. It was melancholy in the extreme, but, as Good said, it might have been worse, for we might have had 'to bury ourselves.' I pointed out that this would have been a difficult feat, but I knew what he meant.

Next we set to work to load an ox-waggon which had been brought round from the Mission with the dead bodies of the Masai, having first collected the spears, shields, and other arms. We loaded the waggon five times, about fifty bodies to the load, and emptied it into the Tana. From this it was evident that very few of the Masai could have escaped. The crocodiles must have been well fed that night. One of the last bodies we picked up was that of the sentry at the upper end. I asked Good how he

managed to kill him, and he told me that he had crept up much as Umslopogaas had done, and stabbed him with his sword. He groaned a good deal, but fortunately nobody heard him. As Good said, it was a horrible thing to have to do, and most unpleasantly like cold-blooded murder.

And so with the last body that floated away down the current of the Tana ended the incident of our attack on the Masai camp. The spears and shields and other arms we took up to the Mission, where they filled an outhouse. One incident, however, I must not forget to mention. As we were returning from performing the obsequies of our Masai friends we passed the hollow tree where Alphonse had secreted himself in the morning. It so happened that the little man himself was with us assisting in our unpleasant task with a far better will than he had shown where live Masai were concerned. Indeed, for each body that he handled he found an appropriate sarcasm. Alphonse throwing dead Masai into the Tana was a very different creature from Alphonse flying for dear life from the spear of a live Masai. He was quite merry and gay, was this volatile child of France; he clapped his hands and warbled snatches of French songs as the grim dead warriors went 'splash' into the running waters to carry a message of death and defiance to their kindred a hundred miles below. In short, thinking that he wanted taking down a peg, I suggested holding a court-martial on him for his conduct in the morning.

Accordingly we brought him to the tree where he had hidden, and proceeded to sit in judgment on him, Sir Henry explaining to him in the very best French the unheard-of cowardice and enormity of his conduct, more especially in letting the oiled rag out of his mouth, whereby he nearly aroused the Masai camp with teeth-chattering and brought about the failure of our plans: ending up with a request for an explanation.

But if we expected to find Alphonse at a loss and put him to open shame we were destined to be disappointed. He bowed and scraped and smiled, and acknowledged that his conduct might at first blush appear strange, but really it was not, inasmuch as his teeth were chattering not from fear—oh, dear no! oh, certainly not! he marvelled how the 'messieurs' could think of such a thing—but from the chill air of the morning. As for the rag, if monsieur could have but tasted its evil flavour, being compounded indeed of a mixture of stale paraffin oil, grease, and gunpowder, monsieur himself would have spat it out. But he did

nothing of the sort ; he determined to keep it there till, alas ! his stomach ‘ revolted,’ and the rag was ejected in an access of involuntary sickness.

‘ And what have you to say about getting into the hollow tree ? ’ asked Sir Henry, keeping his countenance with difficulty.

‘ But, monsieur, the explanation is easy ; oh, most easy ! It was thus : I stood there by the kraal wall, and the little grey monsieur hit me in the stomach so that my rifle exploded, and the battle began. I watched whilst recovering myself from monsieur’s cruel blow ; then, messieurs, I felt the heroic blood of my grandfather boil up in my veins. The sight made me mad. I ground my teeth ! Fire flashed from my eyes ! I shouted “ *En avant !* ” and longed to slay. Before my eyes there rose a vision of my heroic grandfather ! In short, I was mad ! I was a warrior indeed ! But then in my heart I heard a small voice : “ *Alphonse,* ” said the voice, “ restrain thyself, Alphonse ! Give not way to this evil passion ! These men, though black, are brothers ! And thou wouldest slay them ? Cruel Alphonse ! ” The voice was right. I knew it ; I was about to perpetrate the most horrible cruelties : to wound ! to massacre ! to tear limb from limb ! And how restrain myself ? I looked round ; I saw the tree, I perceived the hole. “ *Entomb thyself,* ” said the voice, “ and hold on tight ! Thou wilt thus overcome temptation by main force ! ” It was bitter, just when the blood of my heroic grandfather boiled most fiercely ; but I obeyed ! I dragged my unwilling feet along ; I entombed myself ! Through the hole I watched the battle ! I shouted curses and defiance on the foe ! I noted them fall with satisfaction ! Why not ? I had not robbed them of their lives. Their gore was not upon my head. The blood of my heroic——’

‘ Oh, get along with you, you little cur ! ’ broke out Sir Henry, with a shout of laughter, and giving Alphonse a good kick which sent him flying off with a rueful face.

In the evening I had an interview with Mr. Mackenzie, who was suffering a good deal from his wounds, which Good, who was a skilful though unqualified doctor, was treating him for. He told me that this occurrence had taught him a lesson, and that, if he recovered safely, he meant to hand over the Mission to a younger man, who was already on his road to join him in his work, and return to England.

‘ You see, Quatermain,’ he said, ‘ I made up my mind to this, this very morning, when we were creeping down upon those benighted savages. If we live through this and rescue

Flossie alive,' I said to myself, 'I will go home to England; I have had enough of savages. Well, I did not think that we should live through it at the time; but thanks be to God and you four, we have lived through it, and I mean to stick to my resolution, lest a worse thing befall us. Another such time would kill my poor wife. And besides, Quatermain, between you and me, I am well off; it is thirty thousand pounds I am worth to-day, and every farthing of it made by honest trade and savings in the bank at Zanzibar, for living here costs me next to nothing. So though it will be hard to leave this place, which I have made to blossom like a rose in the wilderness, and harder still to leave the people I have taught, I shall go.'

'I congratulate you on your decision,' answered I, 'for two reasons. The first is, that you owe a duty to your wife and daughter, and more especially to the latter, who should receive some education and mix with girls of her own race, otherwise she will grow up wild, shunning her kind. The other is, that as sure as I am standing here, sooner or later the Masai will try to avenge the slaughter inflicted on them to-day. Two or three men are sure to have escaped in the confusion who will carry the story back to their people, and the result will be that a great expedition will one day be sent against you. It might be delayed for a year, but sooner or later it will come. Therefore, if only for that reason, I should go. When once they have learnt that you are no longer here they may perhaps leave the place alone.'¹

'You are quite right,' answered the clergyman. 'I will turn my back upon this place in a month. But it will be a wrench, it will be a wrench.'

CHAPTER IX.

INTO THE UNKNOWN.

A WEEK had passed, and we all sat at supper one night in the Mission dining-room, feeling very much depressed in spirits, for the reason that we were going to say good-bye to our kind friends, the Mackenzies, and proceed upon our way at dawn on the

¹ By a sad coincidence, since the above was written by Mr. Quatermain, the Masai have, in April, 1886, massacred a missionary and his wife—Mr. and Mrs. Houghton—on this very Tana River.—EDITOR.

morrow. Nothing more had been seen or heard of the Masai, and save for a spear or two which had been overlooked and was rusting in the grass, and a few empty cartridges where we had stood outside the wall, it would have been difficult to tell that the old cattle kraal at the foot of the slope had been the scene of so desperate a struggle. Mackenzie was, thanks chiefly to his being so temperate a man, rapidly recovering from his wound, and could get about on a pair of crutches; and as for the other wounded men, one had died of gangrene, and the rest were in a fair way to recovery. Mr. Mackenzie's caravan of men had also returned from the coast, so that the station was now amply garrisoned.

Under these circumstances we concluded, warm and pressing as were the invitations for us to stay, that it was time to move on, first to Mount Kenia, and thence into the unknown in search of the mysterious white race which we had set our hearts on discovering. This time we were going to progress by means of the humble but useful donkey, of which we had collected no less than a dozen, to carry our goods and chattels, and, if necessary, ourselves. We had now but two Wakwafis left for servants, and found it quite impossible to get other natives to venture with us into the unknown parts we proposed to explore—and small blame to them. After all, as Mr. Mackenzie said, it was odd that three men, each of whom possessed many of those things that are supposed to make life worth living—health, sufficient means, and position, &c.—should of their own pleasure start out upon a wild-goose chase, from which the chances were they never would return. But then that is what Englishmen are, adventurers to the backbone; and all our magnificent muster-roll of colonies, each of which will in time become a great nation, testify to the extraordinary value of the spirit of adventure which at first sight looks like a mild form of lunacy. ‘Adventurer’—he who goes out to meet whatever may come. Well, that is what we all do in the world one way or another, and, speaking for myself, I am proud of the title, because it implies a brave heart and a trust in Providence. Besides, when many and many a noted Croesus, at whose feet the people worship, and many and many a time-serving and word-coining politician are forgotten, the names of those grand-hearted old adventurers who have made England what she is, will be remembered and taught with love and pride to little children whose spirits yet slumber in the womb of unshaped centuries. Not that we three can expect to be numbered with

such as these, yet have we done something—enough, perhaps, to throw a garment over the nakedness of our folly.

That evening, whilst we were sitting on the verandah, smoking a pipe before turning in, who should come up to us but Alphonse, and, with a magnificent bow, announce his wish for an interview. Being requested to fire away, he explained at some length that he was anxious to attach himself to our party—a statement that astonished me not a little, knowing what a coward the little man was. The reason, however, soon appeared. Mr. Mackenzie was going down to the coast, and thence on to England. Now, if he went down country, Alphonse was persuaded that he would be seized, extradited, sent to France, and guillotined. This was the idea that haunted him, as King Charles's head haunted Mr. Dick, and he brooded over it till his imagination exaggerated the danger ten times. As a matter of fact, the probability is that his offence against the laws of his country had long ago been forgotten, and that he would have been allowed to pass unmolested anywhere except in France; but he could not be got to see this. Constitutional coward as the little man is, he infinitely preferred to face the certain hardships and great risks and dangers of such an expedition as ours, than to expose himself, notwithstanding his intense longing for his native land, to the possible scrutiny of a police officer—which is after all only another exemplification of the truth that, to the majority of men, a far-off foreseen danger, however shadowy, is much more terrible than the most serious present emergency. After listening to what he had to say, we consulted among ourselves, and finally agreed, with Mr. Mackenzie's knowledge and consent, to accept his offer. To begin with, we were very short-handed, and Alphonse was a quick, active fellow, who could turn his hand to anything, and cook—ah, he *could* cook! I believe that he would have made a palatable dish of those gaiters of his heroic grandfather which he was so fond of talking about. Then he was a good-tempered little man, and merry as a monkey, whilst his pompous, vainglorious talk was a source of infinite amusement to us; and what is more, he never bore malice. Of course, his being so pronounced a coward was a great drawback to him, but now that we knew his weakness we could more or less guard against it. So, after warning him of the undoubted risks he was exposing himself to, we told him that we would accept his offer on condition that he would promise implicit obedience to our orders. We also promised to give him wages at the rate of ten pounds a month should he ever return to a civilised

country to receive them. To all of this he agreed with alacrity, and retired to write a letter to his Annette, which Mr. Mackenzie promised to post when he got down country. He read it to us afterwards, Sir Henry translating, and a wonderful composition it was. I am sure the depth of his devotion and the narration of his sufferings in a barbarous country, ‘far, far from thee, Annette, for whose adored sake I endure such sorrow,’ ought to have touched up the feelings of the stoniest-hearted chambermaid.

Well, the morrow came, and by seven o’clock the donkeys were all loaded, and the time of parting was at hand. It was a melancholy business, especially saying good-bye to dear little Flossie. She and I were great friends, and often used to have talks together—but her nerves had never got over the shock of that awful night when she lay in the power of those bloodthirsty Masai. ‘Oh, Mr. Quatermain,’ she cried, throwing her arms round my neck and bursting into tears, ‘I can’t bear to say good-bye to you. I wonder when we shall meet again?’

‘I don’t know, my dear little girl,’ I said. ‘I am at one end of life and you are at the other. I have but a short time before me at best, and most things lie in the past, but I hope that for you there are many long and happy years, and everything lies in the future. By-and-by you will grow into a beautiful woman, Flossie, and all this wild life will be like a far-off dream to you; but I hope, even if we never do meet again, that you will think of your old friend and remember what I say to you now. Always try to be good, my dear, and to do what is right, rather than what happens to be pleasant, for in the end, whatever sneering people may say, what is good and what is happy are the same. Be unselfish, and whenever you can, give a helping hand to others—for the world is full of suffering, my dear, and to alleviate it is the noblest end that we can set before us. If you do that you will become a sweet and God-fearing woman, and make many people’s lives a little brighter, and then you will not have lived, as so many of your sex do, in vain. And now I have given you a lot of old-fashioned advice, and so I am going to give you something to sweeten it with. You see this little piece of paper. It is what is called a cheque. When we are gone give it to your father with this note—not before, mind. You will marry one day, my dear little Flossie, and it is to buy you a wedding present which you are to wear, and your daughter after you, if you have one, in remembrance of Hunter Quatermain.’

Poor little Flossie cried very much, and gave me a lock of her

bright hair in return, which I still have. The cheque I gave her was for a thousand pounds (which being now well off, and having no calls upon me except those of charity, I could well afford), and in the note I directed her father to invest it for her in Government security, and when she married or came of age to buy her the best diamond necklace he could get for the money and accumulated interest. I chose diamonds because I think that now that King Solomon's Mines are lost to the world, their price will never be much lower than it is at present, so that if in after-life she should ever be in pecuniary difficulties, she will be able to turn them into money.

Well, at last we got off, after much hand-shaking, hat-waving, and also farewell saluting from the natives, Alphonse weeping copiously (for he has a warm heart) at parting with his master and mistress; and I was not sorry for it at all, for I hate those good-byes. Perhaps the most affecting thing of all was to witness Umslopogaas's distress at parting with Flossie, for whom the grim old warrior had conceived a strong affection. He used to say that she was as sweet to see as the only star on a dark night, and was never tired of loudly congratulating himself on having killed the Lygonani who had threatened to murder her. And that was the last we saw of the pleasant Mission-house—a true oasis in the desert—and of European civilisation. But I often think of the Mackenzies, and wonder how they got down country, and if they are now safe and well in England, and will ever see these words. Dear little Flossie! I wonder how she fares there where there are no black folk to do her imperious bidding, and no sky-piercing snow-clad Kenia for her to look at when she gets up in the morning. And so good-bye to Flossie.

After leaving the mission house we made our way, comparatively unmolested, past the base of Mount Kenia, which the Masai call 'Donyo Egere,' or the 'speckled mountain,' on account of the black patches of rock that appear upon its mighty spire, where the sides are too precipitous to allow of the snow lying on them; then on past the lonely lake Baringo, where one of our two remaining Askari, having unfortunately trodden upon a puff-adder, died of snake-bite, in spite of all our efforts to save him. Thence we proceeded a distance of about a hundred and fifty miles to another magnificent snow-clad mountain called Lekakisera, which has never, to the best of my belief, been visited before by a European, but which I cannot now stop to describe. There we rested a fortnight, and then started out into the track-

less and uninhabited forest of a vast district called Elgumi. In this forest alone there are more elephants than I ever met with or heard of before. The mighty mammals literally swarm there entirely unmolested by man, and only kept down by the natural law that prevents any animals increasing beyond the capacity of the country they inhabit to support them. Needless to say, however, we did not shoot many of them, first because we could not afford to waste ammunition, of which our stock was getting perilously low, a donkey loaded with it having been swept away in fording a flooded river; and secondly, because we could not carry away the ivory, and did not wish to kill for the mere sake of slaughter. So we let the great brutes be, only shooting one or two in self-protection. In this district the elephants, being unacquainted with the hunter and his tender mercies, would allow one to walk up to within twenty yards of them in the open, while they stood, with their great ears cocked for all the world like puzzled and gigantic puppy-dogs, and stared at that new and extraordinary phenomenon—man. Occasionally, when the inspection did not prove satisfactory, the staring ended in a trumpet and a charge, but this did not often happen. When it did we had to use our rifles. Nor were elephants the only wild beasts in the great Elgumi forest. All sorts of large game abounded, including lions—confound them! I have always hated the sight of a lion since one bit my leg and lamed me for life. As a consequence, another thing that abounded was the dreaded tsetse fly, whose bite is death to domestic animals. Donkeys have, together with men, hitherto been supposed to enjoy a peculiar immunity from its attacks; but all I have to say, whether it was on account of their poor condition, or because the tsetse in those parts is more poisonous than usual, I do not know, but ours succumbed to its onslaught. Fortunately, however, that was not till two months or so after the bites had been inflicted, when suddenly, after a two days' cold rain, they all died, and on removing the skins of several of them, I found the long yellow streaks upon the flesh, which are characteristic of death from bites from the tsetse, marking the spot where the insect had inserted his proboscis. On emerging from the great Elgumi forest we, still steering northwards, in accordance with the information Mr. Mackenzie had collected from the unfortunate wanderer who reached him only to die so tragically, struck the base in due course of the large lake, called Laga by the natives, which is about fifty miles long by twenty broad, and of which, it may be remembered, he made mention. Thence we

pushed on nearly a month's journey over great rolling uplands, something like those in the Transvaal, but diversified by patches of bush country.

All this time we were continually ascending at the rate of about one hundred feet every ten miles. Indeed the country was on a slope which appeared to terminate at a mass of snow-tipped mountains, for which we were steering, and where we learnt the second lake of which the wanderer had spoken as the lake without a bottom was situated. At length we arrived there, and ascertaining that there *was* a large lake on the top of the mountains, ascended three thousand feet more till we came to a precipitous cliff or edge, to find a great sheet of water some twenty miles square lying fifteen hundred feet below us, and evidently occupying an extinct volcanic crater or craters of vast extent. Perceiving villages on the border of this lake, we descended with great difficulty through forests of pine-trees, which now clothed the precipitous sides of the crater, and were well received by the people, a simple, unwarlike folk, who had never seen or even heard of a white man before, and treated us with great reverence and kindness, supplying us with as much food and milk as we could eat and drink. This wonderful and beautiful lake lay, according to our aneroid, at a height of no less than 11,450 feet above sea-level, and its climate was quite cold, and not at all unlike that of England. Indeed, for the first three days of our stay there we saw little or nothing of the scenery on account of an unmistakable Scotch mist which prevailed. It was this rain that set the tsetse poison working in our remaining donkeys, so that they all died.

This disaster left us in a very awkward position, as we had now no means of transport whatever, though on the other hand we had not much to carry. Ammunition, too, was very short, amounting to but one hundred and fifty rounds of rifle cartridges and some fifty shot-gun cartridges. How to get on we did not know; indeed it seemed to us that we had about reached the end of our tether. Even if we had been inclined to abandon the object of our search, which, shadow as it was, was by no means the case, it was ridiculous to think of forcing our way back some seven hundred miles to the coast in our present plight; so we came to the conclusion that the only thing to be done was to stop where we were—the natives being so well disposed and food plentiful—for the present, and abide events, and try to collect information as to the countries beyond.

Accordingly having purchased a capital log canoe, large enough

to hold us all and our baggage, from the headman of the village we were staying in, presenting him with three empty cold-drawn brass cartridges by way of payment, with which he was perfectly delighted, we set out to make a tour of the lake in order to find the most favourable place to make a camp. As we did not know if we should return to this village, we put all our gear into the canoe, and also a quarter of cooked water-buck, which when young is delicious eating, and off we set, natives having already gone before us in light canoes to warn the inhabitants of the other villages of our approach.

As we were paddling leisurely along Good remarked upon the extraordinary deep blue colour of the water, and said that he understood from the natives, who were great fishermen--fish, indeed, being their principal food--that the lake was supposed to be wonderfully deep, and to have a hole at the bottom through which the water escaped and put out some great fire that was raging below.

I pointed out to him that what he had heard was probably a legend arising from a tradition among the people which dated back to the time when one of the extinct parasitic volcanic cones was in activity. We saw several round the borders of the lake which had no doubt been working at a period long subsequent to the volcanic death of the central crater which now formed the bed of the lake itself. When it became finally extinct the people would imagine that the water from the lake had run down and put out the big fire below, more especially as, though it was constantly fed by streams running from the snow-tipped peaks about, there was no visible exit to it.

The farther shore of the lake we found, on approaching it, to consist of a vast perpendicular wall of rock, which held the water without any intermediate sloping bank, as elsewhere. Accordingly we paddled parallel with this precipice, at a distance of about a hundred paces from it, shaping our course for the end of the lake, where we knew that there was a large village.

As we went we began to pass a considerable accumulation of floating rushes, weed, boughs of trees, and other rubbish, brought, Good supposed, to this spot by some current, which he was much puzzled to account for. Whilst we were speculating about this, Sir Henry pointed out a flock of large white swans, which were feeding on the drift some little way ahead of us. Now I had already noticed swans flying about this lake, and, having never come across them before in Africa, was exceedingly anxious to

obtain a specimen. I had questioned the natives about them, and learnt that they came from over the mountain, always arriving at certain periods of the year in the early morning, when it was very easy to catch them, on account of their exhausted condition. I also asked them what country they came from, when they shrugged their shoulders, and said that on the top of the great black precipice was stony inhospitable land, and beyond that were mountains with snow, and full of wild beasts, where no people lived, and beyond the mountains were hundreds of miles of dense thorn forest, so thick that even the elephants could not get through it, much less men. Next I asked them if they had ever heard of white people like ourselves living on the further side of the mountains and the thorn forest, whereat they laughed; but afterwards a very old woman came and told me that when she was a little girl her grandfather had told her that in his youth *his* grandfather had crossed the desert and the mountains, and pierced the thorn forest, and seen a white people who lived in stone kraals beyond. Of course, as this took the tale back some two hundred and fifty years, the information was very indefinite; but still there it was again, and on thinking it over I grew firmly convinced that there was some truth in all these rumours, and equally firmly determined to solve the mystery. Little did I guess in what an almost miraculous way my desire was to be gratified.

Well, we set to work to stalk the swans, which kept drawing, as they fed, nearer and nearer to the precipice, and at last we pushed the canoe under shelter of a patch of drift within forty yards of them. Sir Henry had the shot-gun, loaded with No. 1, and, waiting for a chance, got two in a line, and, firing at their necks, killed them both. Up rose the rest, thirty or more of them, with a mighty splashing; and, as they did so, he gave them the other barrel. Down came one fellow with a broken wing, and I saw the leg of another drop and a few feathers start out of his back; but he went on quite strong. Up went the swans, circling ever higher till at last they were mere specks level with the top of the frowning precipice, when I saw them form into a triangle and head off for the unknown north-east. Meanwhile we had picked up our two dead ones, and beautiful birds they were, weighing not less than about thirty pounds each, and were chasing the winged one, which had scrambled over a mass of driftweed into a pool of clear water beyond. Finding a difficulty in forcing the canoe through the rubbish, I told our only remaining

Wakwafi servant, whom I knew to be an excellent swimmer, to jump over, dive under the drift, and catch him, knowing that as there were no crocodiles in this lake he could come to no harm. Entering into the fun of the thing, the man did so, and soon was dodging about after the winged swan in fine style, getting gradually nearer to the rock wall, against which the water washed as he did so.

Suddenly he gave up swimming after the swan, and began to cry out that he was being carried away; and, indeed, we saw that, though he was swimming with all his strength towards us, he was being drawn slowly towards the precipice. With a few desperate strokes of our paddles we pushed the canoe through the crust of drift and rowed towards the man as hard as we could, but, fast as we went, he was drawn faster towards the rock. Suddenly I saw that before us, just rising eighteen inches or so above the surface of the lake, was what looked like the top of the arch of a submerged cave or railway tunnel. Evidently, from the watermark on the rock several feet above it, it was generally entirely submerged; but there had been a dry season, and the cold had prevented the snow from melting as freely as usual; so the lake was low and the arch showed. Towards this arch our poor servant was being sucked with frightful rapidity. He was not more than twenty paces from it, and we were about thirty when I saw it, and with little help from us the canoe flew along after him. He struggled bravely, and I thought that we should have saved him, when suddenly I perceived an expression of despair come upon his face, and there before our eyes he was sucked down into the cruel swirling blue depths, and vanished. At the same moment I felt our canoe seized as with a mighty hand, and propelled with resistless force towards the rock.

We realised our danger now and rowed, or rather paddled, furiously in our attempt to get out of the vortex. In vain; in another second we were flying straight for the arch like an arrow, and I thought that we were lost. Luckily I retained sufficient presence of mind to shout out, instantly setting the example by throwing myself into the bottom of the canoe, ‘Down on your faces—down!’ and the others had the sense to take the hint. In another instant there was a grinding noise, and the boat was pushed down till the water began to trickle over the sides, and I thought that we were gone. But no, suddenly the grinding ceased, and we could again feel the canoe flying along. I turned my head a little—I dared not lift it—and looked up. By the

feeble light that yet reached the canoe, I could make out that a dense arch of rock hung just over our heads, and that was all. In another minute I could not even make out as much as that, for the faint light had merged into shadow, and the shadows had been swallowed up in darkness, utter and complete.

For an hour or so we lay there, not daring to lift our heads for fear lest the brains should be dashed out of them, and scarcely able to speak even, on account of the noise of the rushing water which drowned our voices. Not, indeed, that we had much inclination to speak, seeing that we were overwhelmed by the awfulness of our position and the imminent fear of instant death, either by being dashed against the sides of the cavern, or on a rock, or being sucked down in the raging waters, or perhaps asphyxiated by want of air. All of these and many other modes of death presented themselves to my imagination as I lay at the bottom of the canoe, listening to the swirl of the hurrying waters which ran whither we knew not. One only other sound could I hear, and that was Alphonse's intermittent howl of terror coming from the centre of the canoe, and even that seemed faint and unreal. Indeed, the whole thing overpowered my brain, and I began to believe that I was the victim of some ghastly spirit-shaking nightmare.

(To be continued.)

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal.

THE national genius of Scotland is not histrionic. Philosophers, poets and painters, soldiers and sailors, lawyers, doctors, and statesmen not a few, have come from beyond the Tweed; but on the list of great actors Scotland is meagrely represented. This fact is easily explained by reflections vastly agreeable to our national pride—I speak as a Scotchman—but it indicates nevertheless a certain limitation in the national character. Carlyle's aversion from lecturing as a mixture of ‘prophecy and playactorism’ sprang from an inherited and ingrained prejudice which has begotten a certain bodily and mental rigidity utterly incompatible with mimetic expression. I don't think we are so poor in national virtues that we need claim this as one. What we are poor in is histrionic genius, and I therefore hold it a sacred duty to assert a claim which goes no small way to remove this reproach. Mrs. Kendal is at least half a Scotchwoman—of that there can be no doubt. Her father was as Scotch as Scott himself; and I am not sure that there was not a Scottish strain in her mother's ancestry. Waiving the latter point, however, and admitting that she had the misfortune to be born south of the Border, we may at least say that she is as much a Scotchwoman as Mr. Gladstone is a Scotchman; and we all know that the ex-Premier claims for himself that proudest of titles.

Mr. William Robertson, the father of the lady now known as Mrs. Kendal, was a popular provincial actor and manager, who occasionally, as we shall see, extended his operations to London. He was famous on the Lincolnshire circuit for his performance of country boys and other character-parts of that description. In 1828, or thereabouts, he married an actress named Miss Margherita Elisabetta Marienus, of whom, under her maiden name, I can only find it recorded that she once played Katherine to the Petruchio of the ill-fated E. W. Elton at a little theatre in Berwick Street, Soho. As Mrs. Robertson she became a popular

provincial actress ; and in those days to be a provincial actress was necessarily to be an extremely hard-working woman. Nevertheless, Mrs. Robertson found time to bring into the world no fewer than twelve children. The eldest of these, born in 1829, was Thomas William Robertson, the author of *Caste and School* ; the youngest, born in Great Grimsby, just twenty years later (March 15, 1849), was christened Margaret Shafto, but was known in her family, and before long to all playgoing Britain, as 'Madge' Robertson. The future Mrs. Kendal was thus, as the Irishman put it, 'cradled in the footlights.' All her family and connections were theatrical. From her father, who during the girlhood of his twelfth child was naturally well on in life, she received traditions of the very palmiest of the palmy days. Miss O'Neill was the idol of his recollections. He regarded her as the greatest actress of his time ; but it is not quite certain that he had ever seen Mrs. Siddons. In Macready's Diary we obtain a curious glimpse of Mrs. Kendal's father, in his tribulations as a country manager. On November 29, 1834, Macready visited Louth in Lincolnshire, where he was to 'open' in *Virginius*. 'When ready to go on the stage,' he writes, 'Mr. Robertson appeared with a face full of dismay : he began to apologise, and I guessed the remainder. "Bad house ?" "Bad, sir, there's no one !" "What ! nobody at all ?" "Not a soul, sir, except the Warden's party in the boxes." "What, the devil ! not one person in the pit or gallery ?" "Oh, yes, there are one or two." "Are there five ?" "Oh, yes, five." "Then go on ; we have no right to give ourselves airs if the people do not choose to come and see us ; go on at once !" Mr. Robertson was astonished at what he thought my philosophy, being accustomed, as he said, to be "blown up" by his stars when the houses were bad.'

Little Madge was only four years old when she made her first appearance on the stage. Her father, in partnership with Mr. J. W. Wallack, was managing the Marylebone Theatre, a house which more than once threatened to become a north-western rival to Sadler's Wells in the north-east. One evening *The Stranger* was put in the bills, and the manager's little daughter was dressed in her Sunday frock to run on the stage and soften the heart of Kotzebue's gloomy nobleman. Like many an older *débutante* she was far more concerned about the adornments of her person than about the artistic merits of her performance ; and, catching sight of her nurse in the front row of the pit (in those days stalls were unknown, at least in Marylebone), she astonished the actors and

enraptured the audience by calling out, ‘Oh, nursey, look at my new shoes !’ Mrs. Kendal may thus be said to have begun life characteristically by introducing an irresistible touch of nature among the overstrung and conventional emotions of the quasi-legitimate drama. Of this episode she herself has naturally no recollection ; but the playbill of the performance was given to her some years ago by the late Mr. E. F. Edgar, who was at the time a member of the company.

The first performance of *The Stranger*, under the Wallack management, took place on October 25, 1853, which may accordingly be taken as, approximately at least, the date of Mrs. Kendal’s first appearance. It is curious to glance at the theatrical announcement of the day, and note what a change has come over the London stage in these three-and-thirty years. Shakespeare was in the bill at five theatres, though the Princess’s, which, under Charles Kean, was one of the recognised Shakespearean houses, happened at the moment to be given up to *Sardanapalus* and *The Corsican Brothers*. At the Haymarket, Mr. George Vandenhoff appeared as Hamlet, with Mr. Chippendale as Polonius, Mr. Howe as the Ghost, Mr. W. Farren as Horatio (first time), and Mr. Compton as the Gravedigger. At Sadler’s Wells, Mr. Phelps’s revival of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was in full swing. At the Surrey, Mr. Creswick appeared that week as Macbeth, and as Prospero in *The Tempest*, with Mr. G. Bennett as Caliban, and Miss Fanny Wallack as Miranda. At the City of London Theatre, Mr. E. L. Davenport and Miss Fanny Vining were appearing in *Hamlet* and *Othello*; and at the Marylebone Theatre itself *The Stranger* was played only two nights in the week, while the remaining four were occupied with *Macbeth*—Mr. J. W. Wallack playing Macbeth ; Mr. H. Vandenhoff, Macduff ; Mr. Edgar, Banquo ; Mr. F. Charles, Malcolm, and Mrs. W. Robertson (Mrs. Kendal’s mother), one of the Witches. So much for Shakespeare. At Drury Lane, on the other hand, under Mr. E. T. Smith’s management, Mr. G. V. Brooke had just given place to a ‘Grand American Equestrian Company.’ At the Adelphi, under Benjamin Webster’s management, *The Discarded Son* (an early version of the French play now known in England as *The Queen’s Shilling*) was being played by Leigh Murray, the Keeleys, Paul Bedford, and Miss Woolgar (Mrs. Alfred Mellon). The Lyceum, under the management of Madame Vestris and Charles Mathews, had not yet opened for the season. Alfred Wigan was managing the Olympic, with Robson Emery, Mrs. Stirling, and Miss Priscilla Horton (Mrs. German

Reed) in his company, *Plot and Passion* being the success of the moment. T. P. Cooke, the original William in *Black-Eyed Susan*, was playing that part, along with Long Tom Coffin in *The Pilot*, and Harry Hallyard in *My Poll and my Partner Joe*, at the Great National Standard Theatre, his engagement being announced as his 'last six nights, prior to retirement from the stage.' There was a glorious equestrian entertainment at Astley's, the Victoria and the Pavilion rejoiced in thrilling melodramas, the Britannia offered a Turkish spectacle, and at the Grecian, under the management of Mr. B. O. Conquest, there was running a 'powerful drama,' named *Woman's Secret, or Richelieu's Wager*, 'adapted and translated by Master George Conquest'—now the celebrated pantomimist. These were the theatrical attractions of the week in which Mrs. Kendal, at half the age of the 'baby,' whose *début* is chronicled in the *Rejected Addresses*, made her first appearance on any stage. It was not till February 26, 1855, that, at the same theatre, she played the Blind Child in *The Seven Poor Travellers*, which is usually stated to have been her first part.

At the age of six she performed at the Bristol Theatre the part of Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and afterwards travelled all round the provinces with her father and mother playing it night after night. Eva was a 'singing part,' and Miss Robertson was at this time destined by her parents for the lyric stage. Fortunately for us (since great actresses are far rarer than good singers) early over-exertion impaired her voice. She can still sing delightfully on occasion, as when, to the horror of Shakespearean purists, she introduced 'When daisies pied and violets blue' into the last act of *As You Like It*; but she early abandoned the idea of seeking her career in opera. Eva it may be mentioned, had to endure a nightly apotheosis, being wafted bodily to the celestial regions by a couple of angels (all three strapped to an iron brace) while Uncle Tom in the foreground slept the sleep of the just.

The Bristol and Bath theatres, which formed under the management of Mr. J. H. Chute the best provincial training-school of the period, were, in these early years, Miss Robertson's headquarters. Here she went through a vast and varied experience—dancing in the ballet, singing in burletta and burlesque (she appeared, for instance, in a minor part in Brough's *Endymion*, in which Miss Kate Terry played Diana and Miss Ellen Terry Cupid), and acting in farce, comedy, melodrama, and tragedy. In *Friends or Foes*, a version by Horace Wigan of Sardou's *Nos Intimes*, she played Marécat's scapegrace son (called Theodore

Yielding in the English play), who makes himself ill with smoking; and Mr. David James (who, by the way, played the seductive young lover, Maurice) relates to this day how he lent her the requisite jacket and trousers. On another occasion, Mr. James Bennett, a diminutive tragedian, came on a starring visit, and Miss Robertson, then barely in her teens, was called upon to play Virginia to his Virginius, as any full-grown actress would have overtopped this dumpy Roman Father. Near the beginning of the fourth act, where Virginia, according to the stage direction, 'shrieks and rushes into her father's arms,' Miss Robertson had been instructed to put all possible vigour into the filial embrace. Carrying out her instructions somewhat too conscientiously, she managed to give Mr. Bennett's wig a jerk, which caused the front hair, fixed in the old-fashioned way upon a wire, to rise straight up from his head, like quills upon the fretful porcupine. The consternation of Virginius, the confusion of the young Virginia, and the delight of the audience may easily be imagined. Fortunately American slang had not yet come into vogue, otherwise some irrepressible gallery-boy would doubtless have seized the opportunity to exasperate the tragedian still further by recommending him to 'keep his hair on!'

I am indebted to my friend Mr. Frederick Wedmore for the following interesting notes as to Miss Madge Robertson's career at the Bristol Theatre. 'It was not,' he writes, 'the new theatre now called the Prince's, which Mr. Phipps built several years afterwards, but the old theatre in King Street, down in the city—a playhouse which Garrick had acted in and praised. . . . When I knew it best, just over twenty years ago, in almost the last days of the old stock company, it was managed by Mr. Chute, a relative of Macready's, whose occasional performances of Falstaff and of Don César de Bazan were a treat, and who got together a company unquestionably the best at that moment out of London. In 1862 Miss Kate Terry—fresh from her triumphs as Cordelia at the Princess's, and as the heroine of *Friends and Foes* at the St. James's during an illness of Miss Herbert's—was of the regular troupe, and played everything from the poetic drama to *The Wreck Ashore*. Leaving it at the end of the year to open with Fechter at the Lyceum, she returned for a month or so in the following autumn, and it was then that I first remember seeing Miss Madge Robertson, who played the waiting gentlewoman in *Much Ado about Nothing* to the Beatrice of Kate and the Hero of Ellen Terry. I am not quite sure whether it was in the

Christmas of that year or in the Christmas of the next, but I think it must have been December, 1863, that Madge Robertson was the Cinderella of the Bristol pantomime. The part was small, subordinated very much to that of the Prince—doubtless Miss Henrietta Hodson, then a most popular young performer of boys' parts at the theatre. I think Madge Robertson played with a good deal of spirit in Dance's little comedy, *A Wonderful Woman*. I know that on the occasion of her first benefit, which was announced by the young girl's father with a very becoming modesty, she played, with the spontaneity, freedom, and vigour which are still so much her charm, the part of Mrs. Ormsby Delmaigne in *The Serious Family*. It is not possible that I had any critical discernment at that time, though I was permitted to write theatrical paragraphs for the newspaper editor whose pupil I then was; but perhaps my natural devotion to the theatre sharpened my faculties—at all events, I had not hesitated to be the earliest to declare the high promise of the very young actress who, like myself, was continuing a general education out of working hours. Probably Mrs. Kendal would be the first to allow how much she must have owed to the knowledge of the stage possessed by her father and her mother—her father, as I remember him, not a great, but a judicious actor, stronger in delivery and in bearing than in "characterisation"; her mother, a very able "first old woman," who could play a classical part with dignity, and yet appreciated the humour of the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, and was quite excellent as the fussy Mrs. Willoughby in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*. Yet even then an increasing number of us were able to see in Madge Robertson much more than the result of a father and mother's long experience and continued care.'

Miss Robertson was thus already an experienced actress when, at the age of sixteen, she made her first appearance in London. Mr. Walter Montgomery, who had taken the Haymarket Theatre for an autumn season, opened his campaign on July 29, 1865, with *Hamlet*, he himself playing the Prince, Mr. James Fernandez Laertes, Mr. Montague Osric, Mr. H. Marston the Ghost, Miss Atkinson the Queen, and Miss Robertson Ophelia. She at once made a favourable impression; but, supporting a second-rate actor in an off-season, she could scarcely hope to take the town by storm. According to Mr. Edmund Yates, Walter Montgomery's Hamlet was 'virulent but vulgar, energetic but decidedly provincial,' and altogether the new actress's surroundings were not such as to force her upon public attention. Her

performance of Ophelia was several times repeated, and a week or two later Miss Robertson played Blanche to the King John of Mr. Montgomery, the Faulconbridge of Mr. Fernandez, and the Constance of Miss Atkinson. On August 21, Ira Aldridge, the 'African Roscius,' appeared as Othello, on which occasion Miss Robertson played Desdemona, Mr. Montgomery Iago, Mr. Fernandez Cassio, and the Hon. Lewis Wingfield Roderigo. It is worth noting, too, that 'for one night only' the future Mrs. Kendal appeared in burlesque on the London stage, having consented to supply the place of Miss Ellen Howard, absent through illness, in the part of Cupid in Mr. Burnand's *Ixion, or the Man at the Wheel*. It was in this burlesque that Miss Ada Cavendish appeared as Venus, while the Hon. Lewis Wingfield, according to Professor Morley, 'dressed his thin figure in petticoats and spoke falsetto as Minerva.'

The Haymarket season over, Miss Robertson went to Nottingham, where, on September 25, she spoke the prologue which inaugurated Mr. Walter Montgomery's management of the Theatre Royal. At Nottingham she remained until December, and then passed on to Hull, where a new Theatre Royal, built by a syndicate of local subscribers, had been placed under the management of William Brough, the well-known burlesque writer. In the opening performance (Boxing Night, 1865) she played Anne Carew, the heroine of Tom Taylor's comedy *A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*; and she remained the 'leading lady' of Mr. Brough's company for nearly a year, taking her farewell benefit on November 30, 1866.

All this time she had the advantage of her parents' instruction and support, her mother, indeed, being a member of the company. In the spring of 1866 it happened that Mr. Phelps came to Hull on a three-nights' starring engagement. On Thursday he played Sir Pertinax MacSycophant, on Friday Richelieu—Miss Robertson being the Julie—and on Saturday he was announced for Macbeth. Saturday morning came, and the tragedian appeared at rehearsal. 'Who plays Lady Macbeth?' he asked. 'I do,' said Mrs. Robertson, who, it should be said, was an intimate friend of the sturdy Samuel. 'You, my dear!' he replied, using the accepted form of address at rehearsal, 'No, no—you're too old!' Mrs. Robertson, who was, in fact, about his own age, laughingly assured him that she was the only Lady Macbeth available; but he insisted that the Lady must be decidedly younger than the Thane, and sent for Mr. Brough, who

promptly appeared on the scene. ‘Well, Mr. Phelps,’ said the manager, on being appealed to, ‘if you won’t have Mrs. Robertson, the only alternative is Miss Robertson!—what do you say to her?’ The suggestion that she should, at a few hours’ notice, play such a part as Lady Macbeth, and that to an actor so famous, and, in her youthful eyes, so stern and terrible, as Mr. Phelps, sent Miss Madge’s heart into the heels of her boots. But Phelps, having once committed himself, was not the man to draw back, and the young actress, not yet quite seventeen, found greatness thrust upon her in a way she little anticipated, and as little enjoyed. She knew the lines of the part—in those days an ambitious young actress studied many a character for the study’s sake—and hurriedly rehearsed it under her mother’s guidance. The dresses which Mrs. Robertson was to have worn were the only ones available, and as the proportions of the mother’s figure were not precisely those of the daughter, this circumstance did not tend to place the young tragedienne more at her ease. The evening came, the theatre was crammed with the Saturday-night audience of a north-country seaport, and the curtain rose upon the tragedy. We may well imagine that the feelings of the young girl, as she stood at the wing, letter in hand, ready to make her first entrance, were none of the most enviable; but she heard her father’s voice encouraging her,¹ she screwed her courage to the sticking-place, and dashed at her task. To say that she rivalled Mrs. Siddons in the part would probably be an exaggeration; but she was already popular with the audience, and as nothing pleases Yorkshiremen so much as pluck, they gave her every encouragement. At the end of the first act there was a loud ‘call,’ to which Mr. Phelps responded alone. Theatrical etiquette justified him in doing so; but the audience cared nothing for etiquette, and, fancying that he intended a slight to their young favourite, they hissed him loudly. Nor were they easily appeased. Throughout the evening there were frequent hostile demonstrations, and at the end of the performance a deputation from the gallery met the actress’s father at the stage door, with the offer—‘Just you say t’ word, Mr. Robertson, an’ we’ll dook un in ’t Hoomber!’ Mr. Robertson assured them that the whole affair was a misunderstanding, but it was with some difficulty that Mr. Phelps managed to reach his carriage in safety. He never

¹ ‘My father,’ says Mrs. Kendal, ‘would often stand at the wing and whisper to me as I was going on, “Let nobody else be seen!”’—a very excusable exaggeration on the part of a father inciting his daughter and pupil to do her best.

again, I believe, appeared in Hull; but he bore no malice against the innocent cause of his discomfiture. On the contrary, he soon afterwards honoured Miss Robertson with a special invitation to play Lady Teazle to his Sir Peter at the Standard Theatre, and both Mr. and Mrs. Kendal have now the warmest recollection of his kindness of heart and helpfulness to young and struggling talent.

On the Monday after this eventful Saturday Miss Madge Robertson appeared as Papillonetta, with a pair of butterfly wings, in William Brough's burlesque of that name. The actress who could thus pass at one bound from the tigress to the butterfly was at least not lacking in versatility.

In the early part of 1867 Miss Robertson starred at Liverpool, where Mr. H. J. Byron was then managing the Theatre Royal, and at Nottingham, her repertory consisting of Pauline, Juliet, Lady Teazle, Mrs. Haller, Peg Woffington, &c. On Easter Monday, April 22, she appeared at Drury Lane as Edith Fairlam, in Andrew Halliday's comedy drama, *The Great City*, which ran for more than a hundred nights. A hansom cab, with horse and driver complete, was brought on the stage in this play, and was considered a startling innovation in the direction of 'realism.' The days of 'realistic' troopships, and zerebas, and horse-races were not yet. In the following autumn (October 28) Miss Robertson joined the regular Haymarket Company under Buckstone's management. During the winter and spring of 1867-68 she appeared with Sothern in his small but famous repertory, to which was added Dr. Westland Marston's adaptation of *Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre* (*A Hero of Romance*), Sothern playing Victor de Tourville and Miss Robertson Blanche Dumont. Twelve years later Mr. Coghlan treated the same theme in his comedy called *Good Fortune*, produced by Mr. and Mrs. Kendal at the St. James's in 1880. For Buckstone's benefit, on July 16, 1868, Miss Robertson played Hypolita in Colley Cibber's *She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not*, her future husband, Mr. W. H. Kendal, playing Don Octavio, and Buckstone himself Trappanti. That autumn she went on tour with the Haymarket company, playing Lady Teazle, Lydia Languish, Lady Gay Spanker, Hypolita, and other parts. In a month or two, however, she left the company to return for a short time to her old admirers in Hull, where she appeared, on October 28, in *Passion Flowers*, an adaptation of De Musset's *On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour*, made specially for her by her brother, T. W. Robertson. Meanwhile

she had been engaged by Mr. John Hollingshead to occupy a leading position in the company with which he was about to open the new Gaiety Theatre, not as yet prescient of its high destiny as the fane wherein for so many years the sacred lamp of burlesque was to be tended with such reverent rites. The opening piece (December 21, 1868) was *On the Cards*, an adaptation by Mr. Alfred Thompson of *L'Escamoteur* by MM. D'Ennery and Brésil. In this Miss Robertson appeared along with Mr. Alfred Wigan. On March 28, 1869, T. W. Robertson's comedy of *Dreams* replaced *On the Cards*, the author's sister playing Lady Clara Vere de Vere. Two months later she rejoined the Haymarket company, then playing at the Standard Theatre before starting on its provincial tour. Here she appeared as Miss Hardcastle, and in the course of the subsequent tour added Rosalind and Viola to her repertory. Her connection with the Haymarket company now lasted uninterruptedly for five years and a half—years which established her fame, while they matured and perfected her art.

It was towards the end of this provincial tour (August 7, 1869) that at St. Saviour's Church, Manchester, Miss Madge Robertson became Mrs. W. H. Kendal.

Mr. William Hunter Grimston was born in London on December 16, 1843. His family was not theatrical, and, as a boy, he showed no particular predisposition towards the theatre, or at least was in no sense stage-struck. On the contrary, his friends intended him for the medical profession, while he himself designed (punning apart) to make his way in the world by his pencil; and it was the merest accident that shaped his ends regardless of this rough-hewing. When a lad of eighteen, in the spring of 1861, he strolled one evening into the pit of the Royal Soho Theatre, since known as the Royalty, in Dean Street, Soho. It was then under the management of Mr. Mowbray, whose burlesque of *Billy Taylor, or the Gay Young Fellow*, happened to be in the bills. The young draughtsman was always on the look-out for practice, and at once began to make thumb-nail sketches of the characters. A gentleman standing by looked over his shoulder, was interested in his performance, and introduced himself as the manager of the theatre and author of the burlesque. On the strength of his artistic acquirements Mr. Grimston was made free of the theatre both before and behind the curtain, and was soon bitten with the longing to distinguish himself on the boards. At first he went on

merely as a well-dressed young man among the *invités*, the 'Adelphi guests,' in comedy and farce; but before long he was promoted to a speaking part, that of the juvenile lover in *A Wonderful Woman*. As he was now to appear in the bills, it became necessary for him to choose a theatrical name, and he consulted the manager on the point. 'Why, sir,' said Mr. Mowbray, 'I suppose you mean to be a second Kemble one of these days—suppose you call yourself Kendal?' So said, so done; and the likeness between the two names, which must have struck many people as an odd coincidence, thus proves to be no coincidence at all. For nearly a year Mr. Kendal remained at the Soho Theatre, during which time Miss Ellen Terry, Mr. David James, and Mr. Charles Wyndham were also members of the company. In the spring of 1862 he accepted an engagement at the Moor Street Theatre, Birmingham; but, after six or eight weeks, the manager's insolvency brought the season to a close. In the autumn of the same year Mr. Kendal became a member of the stock company at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, where he served a four years' apprenticeship to his profession, supporting all the chief 'stars' of the period—Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Phelps, Miss Helen Faucit, G. V. Brooke, Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Dion Boucicault, Fechter, Sothern, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews, &c. Fechter was so much pleased with his performance of Laertes, that, some years afterwards, he induced him to leave the Haymarket for a time, in order to play this part at the Lyceum; and being unable to appear one night in the course of his engagement, he suggested that Mr. Kendal should replace him as Hamlet, a proposal which, however, the latter declined. His chief success in original work during his provincial probation was the part of Tom Sutherland, in Dr. Westland Marston's *Favourite of Fortune*, which first saw the footlights in Glasgow during an engagement of Mr. Sothern. Mr. Kendal was led to hope that he would be engaged to play the part on the production of the play in London, but, to his disappointment, Mr. Buckstone himself undertook it, regardless of its being a young light-comedy part. It was thought by some people the most effective part in the piece, which may account both for Mr. Buckstone's desire to play it himself, and for Mr. Sothern's willingness that it should fall into the hands of an actor not naturally suited for it. Mr. Charles Mathews, who took a lively interest in Mr. Kendal's career, was ultimately successful in procuring him a London engagement. In the summer of 1866 he supported Mr. and Mrs. Mathews in a

short starring engagement at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool (then under the management of Mr. Alexander Henderson), during which Mr. Mathews paid him the compliment of resigning to him the part of Tom Dexter in *The Overland Route*, and himself playing Buckstone's part of Lovibond. Being under engagement to appear at the Haymarket in the following autumn, Mr. Mathews insisted on bringing with him his young protégé, who accordingly appeared on October 31, 1866, as Augustus Mandeville in *A Dangerous Friend*. He soon made himself a permanent place in the Haymarket company, and took undisputed possession of what is technically termed 'the juvenile lead.' In the autumn of 1867 he played Romeo and Orlando to the Juliet and Rosalind of Mrs. Scott-Siddons, and in 1868-69, during a temporary engagement of Miss Bateman, he played Manfred in Mosenthal's *Pietra*, and created the part of Bob Levitt the drunken mechanic in Tom Taylor's *Mary Warner*. It was in the summer of 1869, as we have seen, that Miss Madge Robertson became a permanent member of the Haymarket company, then on tour; and before its return to head-quarters she had changed her name (though not yet in the playbills) for that of Mrs. W. H. Kendal.

On October 25, 1869, Mrs. Kendal 'created' the character of Lilian Vavasour in *New Men and Old Acres*, by Tom Taylor and A. W. Dubourg—her first 'creation' at the Haymarket, and one of her most successful. The history of this play affords a curious instance of the shortsightedness which all managers occasionally exhibit in the selection, or rather in the rejection, of pieces. It had gone the round of nearly every management in London, and had been rejected by Mr. Wigan, Mr. Bancroft, Mr. Toole, and many others. At last it found a resting-place at the Haymarket—that is to say, it was laid on the shelf. At that time Mr. Buckstone was in the habit of frequently requesting Mr. Kendal to read and give an opinion upon plays submitted to him; and in this way the manuscript, after having been pigeon-holed for some time, came into Mr. Kendal's hands. He read the play—it was then called *Love or Money*—and was so struck with it that he at once urged Mr. Buckstone by all means to produce it without delay. 'Ah,' said the manager, 'I suppose there is a very fine part in it for you.' 'No,' he replied, 'there's no part for me in it, for I don't think Brown would suit me.' 'Very well,' replied Buckstone, 'I will have a look at it again.' This second reading produced no effect, and nothing more was said on the subject until the follow-

ing year, when, at the commencement of the usual provincial tour, Mr. Kendal once more reminded Mr. Buckstone of the despised comedy, suggesting that he should try it in the country. At last the manager consented, saying, 'Very well. As you think so highly of it, you can play it for your wife's benefit at Manchester.' At Manchester accordingly it was produced, with convincing success, which was redoubled on its transference to the London boards. A somewhat similar history might be related of Mr. Theyre Smith's brilliant little comedietta, *Uncle's Will*, which was not produced in London until the management had been unwillingly convinced of its merits by its reception in Manchester.

In 1870 commenced that series of fantastic blank-verse comedies which established the reputation of Mr. W. S. Gilbert, and confirmed the popularity of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal. The first in order was *The Palace of Truth*, in which Mrs. Kendal played the Princess Zeolide, and her husband Prince Philamine. In the following year *Pygmalion and Galatea* was even more successful than its predecessor, all London flocking to see Mrs. Kendal as the animated statue and Mr. Kendal as the too-creative sculptor. *The Wicked World*, which Mr. Gilbert himself parodied in *The Happy Land*, proved comparatively unattractive, but the fault lay in the tenuity of the subject, not in Mr. Kendal's Ethais or Mrs. Kendal's Selene. In the following year Mr. Gilbert deserted fairyland for the world of to-day, and produced *Charity*, in which Mr. and Mrs. Kendal played Frederic Smailey and Mrs. Van Brugh. Unfortunately Mr. Gilbert had become so habituated to the conditions of his own peculiar fairyland, that he made his everyday personages talk as though the scene were still the Palace of Truth; and this error, with others less serious, led to the comparative failure of the play. Another noteworthy production of this period was Mr. G. W. Godfrey's *Queen Mab*. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, indeed, were the means of introducing not only Mr. Godfrey, but Mr. Sydney Grundy, to the London stage.

These were the principal new plays in which Mr. and Mrs. Kendal took part during their Haymarket period, but both in London and on the provincial tours of the company they did much excellent work in the 'legitimate' repertory of the theatre. Traditions of the great days still lingered about the old house, and the company as then constituted was worthy of the great days, in respect, at least, of comic talent. Buckstone, with his chuckle, leer, and hop, was a born low-comedian, a man of genius after his kind, the acknowledged chief of that race of which Mr.

Toole is almost the sole survivor. Compton, with his roll of the eye, his smack of the lips, and his curtsey of the knees, was an incomparable Touchstone, and Crabtree, and Mawworm. Who does not remember his delivery of Mawworm's sermon, a piece of such irresistible drollery that audiences clung to the tradition established at Liverpool, when a happy 'gag' of the elder Mathews enraptured the public, and, in defiance of all dramatic propriety, used to insist on encoring it? As for 'old Chippendale,' with his twinkling eye, short nose, and comically sensitive mouth, there was never, perhaps, a more delicate or more amiable actor on any stage. He seemed born to play Mr. Hardcastle, and Sir Anthony Absolute, and Sir Peter Teazle; or rather Goldsmith and Sheridan seemed to have foreseen him when they created these genial humourists. Not less lovely (if one may use in its uncorrupted sense a word which schoolgirl slang has debased) was his Adam, in *As You Like It*, an ideal embodiment of 'the constant service of the antique world'; and I can see to this day the expression of childlike benevolence and utter guilelessness with which, in the part of Uncle Foozle, he pathetically demanded 'Have I a deadly aspect?'¹ Henry Howe, again, still happily among us, was as sterling a comedian as ever trod the boards; and the minor members of the company were no less valuable in their way—'little Clark,' for instance, with his peculiar quaintness, and Rogers, a storehouse of memories and traditions, who could go over every detail in the 'business' of Macready's Alfred Evelyn or Mrs. Nisbett's Lady Gay Spanker. Among such comrades as these did Mr. and Mrs. Kendal work earnestly and untiringly, both in London and the provinces. Orlando and Rosalind, Captain Absolute and Lydia Languish, Charles Surface and Lady Teazle, Young Marlow and Miss Hardcastle—these parts and such as these formed a pleasant and beneficial change from the heroes and heroines of Gilbertian and cup-and-saucer comedy. Even parts which would have been declined by actresses less devoted to their art fell to the lot of Mrs. Kendal. She delighted Mr. Buckstone, for example, by assuming the false front of sausage-curls appropriate to Mrs. Dove in *Married Life*, and playing the part (which was, of course, quite outside her stated 'line of business') in such a way as to make a new character of it. In the bright little duologues, which were then in fashion—

¹ Mr. Chippendale, who is almost as old as the century (born 1801), has latterly declined into a state of 'second childishness.' It is pathetic to hear of the fine old actor repeating to himself, as his mind wanders over bygone days, broken phrases from the parts he played so delightfully.

such as Mr. S. Theyre Smith's *Uncle's Will* and *A Little Change* by Mr. Sydney Grundy—Mr. and Mrs. Kendal were very successful. Mr. Kendal, too, won laurels on his own account by several light-comedy performances. Horatio Craven, in *His First Champagne*, was one of these, and another was Jeremy Diddler, in *Raising the Wind*, which he repeated almost a hundred consecutive times.

On leaving the Haymarket Mr. and Mrs. Kendal appeared at the Opera Comique in the early part of 1875, under Mr. Hollingshead's management, playing *The Lady of Lyons*, *As You Like It*, and *She Stoops to Conquer*. Meanwhile Mr. Hare, having seceded from the Prince of Wales's company, was preparing to commence management on his own account at the Court Theatre, and with true managerial instinct determined to make Mr. and Mrs. Kendal the pillars of his house. They appeared on the first night of his management (March 13, 1875) in Mr. Coghlan's *Lady Flora*, a rather unsuccessful production. This was followed by Mr. Hamilton Aidé's comedy, *A Nine Days' Wonder*, after which came *Broken Hearts*, a fourth and last fairy play from the pen of Mr. W. S. Gilbert. It was successful enough to call forth a parody, *Cracked Heads*; but was too insubstantial to hold its place long on the stage. A very different play followed it, in which both Mr. and Mrs. Kendal found and seized the opportunity for a remarkable and enduringly popular creation. This was Mr. Palgrave Simpson's adaptation of *Les Pattes de Mouche*, the ingenious comedy with which Sardou made his first great success. Colonel Blake, in *A Scrap of Paper* (so the adaptation was called), remains to this day one of the very best of Mr. Kendal's performances, and Mrs. Kendal has done few things more thoroughly delightful than her Susan Hartley.

They now deserted Mr. Hare for a time, to join forces with Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft at the Prince of Wales's. After making a gallant struggle to keep his stage supplied with none but home-made wares, Mr. Bancroft had at last been forced to commission Messrs. Bolton and Savile Rowe (now known as Messrs. Clement Scott and B. C. Stephenson) to make him an adaptation of *Nos Intimes*, which was produced under the title of *Peril*. In this production Mrs. Kendal played Lady Ormond; Mr. Bancroft Sir George Ormond; Mr. Kendal Dr. Thornton; and Mr. Sugden Captain Bradford. The success was great; and while a similar and even more powerful attraction was being

prepared to follow it up, *London Assurance*—revised by the author, and reduced to four acts—was placed in the bills, with Mrs. Kendal as Lady Gay Spanker, Mr. Kendal as Charles Courtly, Mr. Bancroft as Dazzle, and Mrs. Bancroft as Pert. At last, on January 12, 1878, Messrs. Bolton and Savile Rowe's adaptation of Sardou's *Dora*, entitled *Diplomacy*, was produced with signal and memorable success. The cast was perhaps the strongest on record in the annals of the contemporary stage. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal played the hero and heroine (Julian Beauclerc and Dora), Mr. Bancroft played Orloff, Mrs. Bancroft the Countess Gicka, Mr. John Clayton Harry Beauclerc, and Mr. Arthur Cecil Baron Stein. Thus, with the exception of Mr. Hare, all the leading figures of our modern school of comedy appeared on the same stage; and the result was an almost unprecedented success, the crowning glory of the Bancroft management.

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal now rejoined Mr. Hare, appearing at the Court Theatre. After reviving *A Scrap of Paper* and *The Ladies' Battle*, they produced *The Queen's Shilling*, adapted by Mr. G. W. Godfrey from *Le Fils de Famille*, in which again Mr. and Mrs. Kendal found two of their very best parts—Frank Maitland and Kate Greville—while Mr. Hare's Colonel Daunt was also memorably excellent. It was with *The Queen's Shilling* that Messrs. Hare and Kendal, in the following autumn, commenced their managerial partnership at the St. James's Theatre (October 4, 1879).

I need not trace in detail the history of seven eventful seasons of management at the St. James's. Both before and behind the curtain Messrs. Hare and Kendal have pursued the methods inaugurated by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft at the Prince of Wales's. They have striven after perfection of scenic realism and an even excellence of acting; they have done all in their power to render 'the front of the house' comfortable and attractive to a luxurious generation. Behind the curtain they have remembered that dramatic artists have, or ought to have, the tastes and habits of ladies and gentlemen, and they have attended to the proprieties and comforts of life in a way which managers of the old school would have regarded as extravagant and highly unnecessary. In her famous address before the Social Science Congress at Birmingham, Mrs. Kendal attributed to Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft the much-needed reform of what may be called the domestic arrangements behind the scenes—a reform which has since extended to all theatres of repute. As a matter of curiosity, I may mention

one characteristic detail in the traditional economy—economy in two senses—of old-fashioned theatres. In the gentlemen's dressing-rooms soap and towels were provided by the management, but the ladies of the company were expected to furnish these necessaries for themselves ! Mrs. Kendal, I believe, was instrumental in procuring the abolition of this petty abuse ; so it cannot be said that she has passed her life without striking a blow in vindication of the Rights of Women.

Though the Hare-Kendal management, like Dogberry, ‘ hath had losses ’ now and then, it has on the whole prospered greatly, and has made the St. James's, which had spelt ruin to many former managers, one of the most popular and fashionable of West End houses. It is true that, with two exceptions, the chief successes of the seven years have been of French origin, and this is sometimes made a subject of reproach to Messrs. Hare and Kendal. Perhaps they are not altogether to be acquitted of a certain timidity, but in playing for the vast stakes involved in modern management who would not be timid ? Again, a committee of three is naturally more cautious than a single manager, responsible only to himself. In hearing a play read, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and Mr. Hare generally follow the plan adopted by Macready at the famous reading of Bulwer Lytton's *Richeieu*—no one makes any remarks, but each of the three hearers has a pencil and paper on which to jot down, act by act, his or her impressions and opinions, so that they may, literally, compare notes at the end. This is a severe ordeal to pass, and it is no wonder that though many are called few are chosen. Yet it must not be supposed that the St. James's management is lacking either in enterprise or liberality. One of their first moves was to produce Lord Tennyson's *Falcon*, exquisitely mounted and exquisitely played ; and if the ungrateful public failed to reward their skill and care, that was no fault of theirs. Again, they have deserved well of the theatrical state in giving that remarkable writer, Mr. A. W. Pinero, what was practically his first chance, besides affording him many subsequent opportunities. *The Money-spinner* made his talent known to students of the stage, *The Squire* established his reputation with the great public. It was with reference to *The Squire* that a charge of plagiarism was brought against author and managers alike, which, though it no doubt helped to assure the success of the piece, was the cause of much ill-will and annoyance. No one who knows how frequent and strange are coincidences of idea will have any difficulty in

accepting Mr. Pinero's disclaimer of all indebtedness to 'Far from the Madding Crowd.' Only the following year another coincidence occurred under almost precisely similar circumstances, which has unfortunately resulted in depriving us, as yet, of one of Mr. Pinero's works. He had written a play specially for the St. James's; he read it to the management, and it was accepted. The very same evening Mr. Kendal, happening to open his desk, caught sight of a manuscript which had been sent him for perusal some months before. He took it up, looked into it, and was astonished to find it almost identical in idea with the play which Mr. Pinero had read to him only a few hours before. On learning this similarity, Mr. Pinero, rendered sensitive by recent experience, at once withdrew his play, and entered into communication with the author who had anticipated him. At his suggestion each read the other's play and each wrote the other a letter detailing the circumstances, as a safeguard against subsequent misunderstandings. Here, for the present, the matter rests, neither of the plays having yet been produced. When we come to think of it, there are so many searchers after dramatic motives, and so few motives, comparatively speaking, which are capable of successful treatment on the modern stage, that it would be a miracle if two authors should not now and then happen to seize simultaneously upon the same idea.

Mrs. Kendal has sometimes threatened to retire from the stage when she has turned the corner of her fortieth year; but one trusts that when the time arrives she will not have the heart to leave empty a place which, to alter Orlando's words, may never be 'as well supplied.' She is, and will be for years to come, in the maturity of her powers, and absolute idleness can scarcely be an attraction to an artist so devoted to her art. Even if the English public had no claims upon her, she owes the Americans a visit; and it will be strange if, having once seen her, the Americans are content to let that once suffice.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

Sorel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'CHRISTINA NORTH,' 'A GOLDEN BAR,' &c.

CHAPTER I.

SOREL LEIGH was rich and young and beautiful, and she took frankly as her right the good things which the world had to offer. She was not so foolish as to be proud of a good fortune which she had done nothing to acquire ; but it seemed to her that since she had been so favoured, a voluntary act of self-sacrifice would have been little else than ingratitude. She had the self-confidence engendered by her position as an only and motherless girl, which derives an additional stimulus from an instinctive rebellion against the advice of maiden aunts. Her father interfered with her very little ; he was engaged at his bank during the day, and he had a good many business anxieties, but he had no anxieties about Sorel. He was glad that she had so many friends. There was always some nominal chaperon to be found, to take her wherever she wished to go ; a great many people admired her, but there was safety in numbers. Sometimes he heard a rumour of some special attentions paid to her, and then he would question the girl, only to be reassured by her frank replies. When she was eighteen she had been already 'out' for a year, and she was still fancy-free.

'I like people to admire me,' she would say. 'It is pleasant to be liked ; but I should not like it if it became serious. I don't think you need be uneasy, papa ; no one has become serious as yet. I think they know that I should not like it.'

But this was an unnatural frame of mind, and it was not likely to last very long.

There was a Mr. Giles Lister, who took pains to be in her society, and who singled her out with an absolute indifference to the strictures of maiden aunts—about whom she began to feel

that she would rather not be questioned. She did not tell herself that she was in love, though he did his best to compel her to acknowledge it. After many and varied experiences, he was agreeably surprised to find that he was capable of falling in love himself; and in this case all the circumstances were in his favour. He felt it to be eminently desirable that he should marry money, and money was here happily allied to youth and beauty, and an innocent capacity for enjoyment which was very contagious. He felt that life would be sensibly brightened if he could pass through it with Sorel Leigh at his side. This conviction was strengthened during a week that they spent together at a country house. Already her blue eyes met his less frankly, already an undefined feeling made her heart beat quicker at his approach; and when at last, upon the impulse of the moment, he spoke, he did not feel any serious doubts as to her answer. He had always been popular with women. He had an easy self-possession which was yet not wanting in deference, and an air of distinction which is a surer passport to favour than positive good looks. He found life so pleasant as to have no occasion for serious preoccupations; and yet he was unlike the others, and when he asked if he might not love her, Sorel did not forbid it. But though ordinarily self-confident enough, she did feel that upon this occasion she could not venture to be altogether independent. She wrote to her father, and said that she must wait for his answer; and the answer came in the shape of a telegraphic summons to return home immediately. Mr. Leigh had had a seizure, and the doctors gave little hope of his recovery.

Sorel had had but little reason to love him, but he was her only near relation, and she clung to him as her sole support. Yet in the days that followed, of absorbing anxiety and unavailing watching, and even through the gloom of death, one memory had still power to quicken the pulses of her life. She still felt Giles Lister's eyes upon her as they parted, and heard his whispered farewell. When she sat orphaned and desolate in the great London house, she yet felt that so long as he lived she would not be altogether alone in the world.

He had written her one short note: she received it on the day of her father's death; but after that he gave no further sign. When they told her that she was not only orphaned, but destitute, she felt strange and forlorn rather than grieved; it did not occur to her to connect this fact with Mr. Giles Lister's disappearance. But the days passed and he never came. It was the failure of his

speculations which had occasioned or hastened old Mr. Leigh's death, and Lister knew it; and he found it expedient to go abroad for a time.

He said to himself that Sorel would understand his silence. Any girl of sense would perceive that further intercourse between them would be a mistake. Had he spoken—had he proposed? Well! he hardly knew. It was most likely that she had not taken it seriously; it was a great mistake to be serious; but it would be still worse, it would be confoundedly awkward, to write and tell a girl that you could not marry her. It was to imply that she wished to marry you, and that was little less than an insult. No, he could not do that; and so he went away, and Sorel heard no more of him. He travelled—he led a life of adventure and of a certain amount of hardship; he ventured his life freely as a thing which was of no account to anyone but himself, and upon which he himself could not conscientiously put a high price. He very rarely remembered Sorel Leigh. Of the seven years which he passed abroad he spent five in India. Once or twice, when at some distant station, he met with a girl fresh from England, and heard her commended or admired, he said to himself that she had not Sorel Leigh's beauty, nor her ready wit and spirited ways. Beside his remembrance of her, these girls seemed lifeless and insipid; but even that memory faded gradually from his mind. Perhaps he might have loved her, he was not sure; he had certainly never loved anyone else, but that was not her fault.

He very seldom heard from England. He had only one near relative, his mother's sister, a certain Lady Heathcote, a widow with whom he had never been upon any but the most distant terms of civility, and it was therefore a great surprise to him to receive a letter from her lawyer stating that she proposed to settle her fortune, which was considerable, upon him, on condition of his taking her late husband's name.

Giles thought it a very peculiar and absurd request, but he was a philosopher; one name, to his mind, was as good as another; and the money, as he reflected, was not to be despised.

'But I think that I shall go to England,' he said to his chief friend, a delicate, fair, and boyish hero, decorated for deeds of cold-blooded courage which had rarely been surpassed. 'At any rate, I shall go for a time.'

'And get married?' asked the young man laughing, as he lighted his cigar.

'I think not. Marriage is a lottery. I am not generally in luck. I should be sure to draw a blank.'

'That would be better than a wrong number. You might write your name upon it.'

'I should spoil the page,' the other answered with some seriousness. 'Good heavens! to think that five years ago I considered that any woman would be fortunate who married me!'

'She would be more fortunate now.'

'Possibly,' he answered shortly, and yet he knew that his friend was right. These years had done something for him. He was no longer a spoilt man of the world. Strangers only acquainted with his indifferent manners and his habits of life wondered at the attachment of his friends and the devotion of his servants; but to them alone were known the many acts of kindness and generosity which he hid from all but the recipients as if they had been crimes.

'Seven years,' repeated Warner, glancing up at him; 'you must be changed!'

Giles turned and looked at himself carelessly in the little shabby mirror above the fireplace. He saw a face naturally pale, but tanned by exposure to sun and weather; cheeks slightly sunken, rather by toil and travel than by ill-health; dark, penetrating eyes; a mouth veiled by a long moustache; hair close cropped, yet falling a little above the brow.

'Yes, I am altered,' he said, smiling. 'My best friends, if I had any in England, would hardly know me. This jacket,' touching the rough flannel, 'is as much like my coat of other days as I am like Giles Lister of seven years ago. My place will certainly know me no more.'

'Then why leave us?'

'Well! I have taken my passage. It would be a pity to waste the money. Besides, I may find when I have investigated the matter, that there is some legal flaw, and that I have changed my name to no purpose, and I do not think my aunt should be left to her own devices; she is very likely to be imposed upon. I hear she has recently adopted a sort of humble companion—a starving young lady artist; that looks bad.'

'It is all nonsense, however,' young Warner said to himself; 'I believe he is going because poor Sumner is invalidated home in the *Columbia*, and he thinks he will have no one to look after him.'

But he knew his friend too well to speak his thoughts aloud.

CHAPTER II.

'It is a serious misfortune!' said Sorel Leigh to herself.

She was standing by the edge of the river, on the sloping lawn of the cottage which Lady Heathcote had taken for the summer. As her nephew had said, Lady Heathcote was eccentric. She liked to do things in her own way. Other people went out of London to their country houses, to the seaside, or abroad. Lady Heathcote had no country house of her own, and she disliked country house society, she detested a watering-place, and thought that no place out of England was fit to live in. She had no sentiment about love in a cottage, but when she left town she liked to be free from all the paraphernalia of riches. She left her cook and her menservants behind, and abjured morning calls and made-dishes. She had gone to this cottage on the Thames, accompanied only by her old housekeeper and by Sorel Leigh, to whom she had taken a great fancy. The girl was so unsuccessful and yet was making such a brave and cheerful struggle for existence, her poverty was so light-hearted and unobtrusive that it ceased to be a reproach to the more fortunate. She and Lady Heathcote suited each other exactly, and were passing the summer days together very agreeably when an unexpected announcement came to disturb their peace. Lady Heathcote's nephew and heir was coming home from India, and proposed to visit his aunt. He might arrive almost as soon as the letter which gave notice of his approach.

Yes, as Sorel said to herself, it was a serious misfortune. At any moment he might invade their quiet retreat, bringing with him the *gène* of uncongenial companionship. 'A man, too,' cried Lady Heathcote, 'who was always absurdly luxurious. He will want a good dinner and a man to wait upon him. Just imagine, old Wilson will cook his dinner and Tommy will brush his clothes.' Old Wilson was the housekeeper and Tommy was the garden boy. 'Well! there is one comfort, he is not likely to stay long.'

'No, he is not likely to stay long,' echoed Sorel to herself.

She went slowly up the narrow garden path to the cottage porch. Within it there stood an easel with an unfinished drawing upon it, not a sketch of the house or the river, for Sorel was not a landscape painter. This was a fancy picture, illustrating a

fanciful idea—a man fighting his own shadow before a mirror. Like many young people, Sorel was apt to choose ambitious subjects; but she shook her head at the result of her efforts with a smile which was half-contemptuous and half-kindly. She was tolerant of her own failures, but she was not deceived. She had no great opinion of her own powers.

She found Lady Heathcote in her little sitting-room upstairs, sorting flower-seeds. She had a number of little packets spread out before her, and looked happy and busy. She knew nothing of gardening; that made it all the more interesting.

'There is such a delightful certainty about these matters,' she observed. 'You sow mignonette and you are quite certain that it will not come up groundsel. Now, how different it is in the moral world! You sow all kinds of good advice and virtuous resolves, and they come up as vices. You sow a joy, and it comes up a sorrow.'

'Alas! that joys, at noon so small
Should make their evening shades so tall,'

quoted Sorel, softly.

'Ah, well! I should like to sow a joy in your life, my dear child,' cried the old lady.

'But according to your own experience that would be very dangerous,' answered Sorel. 'Still, tell me, if you were to act the fairy godmother, what would you give me? Tell me; I am curious.'

'I would give you a husband,' cried Lady Heathcote promptly—'a husband rich and kind and worthy of you, and it is very likely that you, in your ignorance and self-will, would spurn the gift.'

'Not at all,' answered Sorel. 'On the contrary, I can see that if such an unlikely person were to appear, and wish me to marry him, I should be most unwise to refuse—yes,' emphatically nodding her head, 'most unwise. There is only one man in the world who I am quite sure that I would not marry, even if he were as rich as the Marquis of Carabbas and had a list of merits as long as his pedigree.'

'Why, who do you mean?' The old lady looked up, alert and curious.

'It is no one whom you know,' answered the girl shortly. But a freak of memory brought before her inward vision a moonlit garden with the shadows falling black upon the turf, and two dark eyes full of love and laughter were looking down into hers,

and her faithless lover cried under his breath, ‘Can you love me a little, Sorel?’

She had never forgiven him. She was thankful that she would never be obliged to look upon him again: he had done her at least one good service when he quitted England; yet, since he was alive, there was one man whom she would not forgive—whom she would never marry.

‘I am sorry for him,’ said Lady Heathcote, laughing, as she cast a glance upon the girl, which was at once shrewd, inquisitive, and admiring. In truth, Sorel was even handsomer than she had been seven years ago. Her blue eyes were deeper, her mouth had more varied expressions, but her smile when it came was as sweet and as frank as of old.

‘It is a pity it should be all wasted on an old woman like me,’ said Lady Heathcote to herself. ‘Shall you be dull, if you are left alone here to-day?’ she said aloud. ‘I have just heard from my old friend, Mrs. Drummond. She writes to ask if I will spend a long day with her: and it is likely to be a very long one,’ muttered the old lady to herself; ‘but she has sent her carriage for me, and I cannot well refuse. Shall you be lonely?’

‘Not in the least,’ answered Sorel. ‘I have my poor picture to finish, and some dressmaking to do. I shall be very busy; I shall’—smiling—‘not miss you at all.’

It was barely eleven o’clock; the sun had not as yet dried up all the dew, nor banished the early freshness of the morning, though overhead, in a blue cloudless sky, he shone with undimmed splendour. Sorel stood for an instant looking after her old friend as she drove away, and then went up to the little sitting-room above the porch, set the window wide open, and took up her work. She would have liked to spend the day on the river; but poverty is a task-mistress, and Sorel, who could not afford to have her work done for her, had a new dress to finish. In the meantime, below in the garden, Mr. Giles Lister had pushed open the little wicket as if he were in the habit of entering that trim enclosure every morning of his life, and had sauntered up the cobbled path, looking leisurely about him.

The first thing which attracted his attention was the easel in the porch. ‘Ah! the struggling artist,’ he said to himself; ‘and—regarding the drawing—“ambitious, of course. What pleasure can my excellent aunt find in filling the place with budding genius? All roots and stalks, no flowers or fruit. Well! if the

incomprehensible is great, this ought to be a great picture. Two men fighting before a mirror: why, it is the same—the one a reflection of the other. This must be a philosophical genius: what can she mean? Shadow and substance, soul and body?’

On the stone bench a book lay open. He took it up and his eye fell upon a marked passage. ‘Every soul is a twin star, born together in one frame. One twin is good, the other vile; hence the contradictions in man’s nature and the constant strife with self.’

‘So this poor painter is not even original, but has to illustrate other people’s ideas. My twin,’ cried Mr. Giles Lister to himself, ‘must be a perfect saint if he is the reverse of me.’

He turned to the title-page; it might give him the artist’s name.

Sorel Leigh! Gracious heavens! What fatality had brought her here?

He had almost forgotten her: no, not altogether forgotten. Somewhere in the background of memory there was an image of a girl, whom he might have loved, who might have loved him; and her name was Sorel Leigh. And with the rush of recollection there came a strong desire to see her once more face to face, to know if she were altered, and if she had forgiven him. But it was easy to answer that last question: if she were the same whom he had known she would do anything to escape from his presence; she would not remain even for a night under the same roof with him. And yet she should remain; he would not let her go so easily.

Once more his eyes fell upon the picture, and a happy inspiration flashed across his mind. She herself might teach him a lesson. He was not the Giles Lister who seven years ago had trifled with her affections and left her without remorse. That was his double, his twin brother, his toher self. He was now Mr. Heathcote; as much changed in person as in mind. Seven years older, tanned and altered, with a long moustache, which he had not worn in those other days, it was not likely that she would know him.

So, taking courage, he pulled the bell; but his ring was unanswered. Lady Heathcote had driven away half an hour ago. Old Wilson had slipped off to visit a friend in the village. Only Sorel was in the little sitting-room above the porch. As a more furious ring succeeded to the first, she called to Wilson to attend to the bell, but no Wilson answered.

How tiresome! It was the first time that anyone had called, and there was not a servant in the house to receive them; and it was a pity to set people gossiping about Lady Heathcote's eccentricities.

Then she, too, like the visitor below, had a happy inspiration. She snatched up one of Wilson's big aprons, tied it over her print dress, put up her hands to smooth her hair, and ran downstairs.

'Is Lady Heathcote at home?' asked a man's voice.

'Not at home, sir,' answered Miss Sorel with servantlike promptitude, preparing to take his card. Then suddenly lifting her eyes she saw standing upon the threshold the one man in the world whom she hoped she might never meet again.

CHAPTER III.

FOR an instant his self-possession deserted him. She was the Sorel Leigh of seven years ago—tall, slight, and proud—now, as always, the fairest woman he had ever known; and he—he was the man who had of his own free will deserted her.

'Mr. Lister!' she had exclaimed. He could not misunderstand the meaning of her tone. Yet he remembered an incident which only a few days ago had reminded him of the changes which time brings; his chance encounter with an old friend, his want of recognition, his excuses afterwards.

'You are a different man; I should not have known you,' he had said.

Sorel had been more clear-sighted. And yet—

'My name is Heathcote,' he said quietly. 'You' (smiling) 'must be Miss Leigh. I have heard of you from my aunt. Did she not tell you that she expected me?'

There was no trace in his manner of any remembrance of the past; yet, thrown off her balance by the shock and the surprise, she forgot that it would be truest wisdom to fall in with his tone.

'That she expected *you*? ' she repeated. 'No! If she had said so—'

She broke off, and he surveyed her with an air of courteous surprise.

'If she had said so?' he repeated inquiringly.

'You would not have found me here,' she answered,

'Excuse me ;' and he looked perplexed and a little amazed. 'But I do not understand. What have I done to justify such a prejudice ? What can you have heard, since I have never had the honour of meeting you before ?'

Sorel paused. She was recovering her self-possession, and with it her sense of the miserable mistake which she had made in alluding to the past he had more wisely determined to bury in oblivion. Yet, now that her error was irretrievable, she was too proud to shrink from the explanation he had challenged. Standing in the doorway, with one hand tightly closed over the edge of her coarse apron, she made her meaning clear.

' You know best for what purpose you deny our previous acquaintance,' she said. ' If it is lest it should prejudice you in your aunt's eyes, you need have no fear that she will learn it from me. We need not play to an empty house. I will only remind you that there was a time when *you* desired that our acquaintance should cease ; and now, at least, I entirely concur in your views.'

Yet whilst she spoke, with her indignant eyes upon his face, she saw it change, and the expression of bewildered astonishment gave way to attention.

' I understand—I remember, now ! ' he cried. ' It must have been Giles. Are you not speaking of Giles Lister ? Poor Giles ! '

' But you are——you are Giles ? '

' I am his elder brother.' And he sighed.

Sorel turned and looked at him with quick suspicion. It struck her the sigh was somewhat forced.

' Are you *sure* that it was your brother, Mr. Lister ? '

' He was very like me,' he answered. ' It was a resemblance which often got me into trouble. You must be sure not to mention him to my aunt. There were circumstances——; in short, she never speaks of him.'

' She never spoke of any but one nephew,' answered Sorel.

' Exactly. And now, since this mystery is cleared up, and you find that we have had nothing to do with one another in the past, may we not start afresh ? '

' Come in,' said Sorel, colouring.

Into what mistake had she not fallen. What revelations might she not have made to this stranger, who spoke with Giles's voice, and looked at her with his eyes ! And the resemblance which had struck her at first faded as she looked more closely.

Giles had been handsome. This man—his brother—was different. A superficial likeness there was in the voice, the smile; but yet—

‘Come in,’ she repeated, a little shyly, leading the way into the house.

The drawing-room windows were open, and pleasantly shaded by the verandah, round which roses and honeysuckle had twined themselves in sweet and careless profusion. There were fresh chintzes upon the chairs, a great bowl of flowers on the table, and an air of rustic simplicity and cleanliness about the little dwelling.

‘I am very sorry that Lady Heathcote is out. Indeed, she is out for the day,’ observed Sorel, still hardly recovered from the embarrassment of her false step. ‘She was asked to spend “a long day” with an old friend, and feared it would be long indeed.’

‘Yes; how different it is with a new one,’ answered Giles promptly.

‘Not at all,’ said Sorel, with quiet emphasis. ‘I should not wish to spend a whole day in anyone’s company. I should soon have nothing left to say. Will you ring if you want anything, Mr. Heathcote? Luncheon will be ready at one o’clock. I think you will find to-day’s paper in the dining-room, if you have not seen it.’

‘But you are not going to leave me by myself, Miss Leigh?’

‘I am afraid there is no one else with whom to leave you.’ But she could not help smiling at his tone of serious remonstrance. ‘I am very busy to-day—particularly busy.’

‘Do let me help you.’

‘No thank you, you could not do that; but you might explore the country.’

‘I should be sure to lose my way.’

‘Then why not go on the river?’

‘I should be most happy if you would come with me.’

‘But I am really busy this morning,’ answered Sorel, relenting a little. ‘After luncheon, perhaps.’

‘Is it not luncheon time now?’

‘Not for an hour or more,’ speaking decidedly, and retreating to the door, which in another moment she had closed behind her.

Giles stepped to the window and stood looking out, without seeing it, at the beauty of the summer morning. In what a predicament was he not placed! Sorel’s sincere gaze demanded, and almost compelled, corresponding sincerity; and yet, when dis-

honoured by his own confession, should he not be at once dismissed and repudiated by the only woman he cared for ? Yes, he was certain now there never had been—there never would be—another. What a fool he had been, he said to himself, to have weighed any worldly advantages in the balance with Sorel Leigh, and to have wasted seven years with Leah when he might have had his Rachel. And yet it was good luck for her. He was ready enough to own it now, when he wished that the Giles Lister of seven years ago were not only dead, but buried.

‘ Yet I might have a chance—just a chance,’ he thought, ‘ if I could keep up the delusion ; but my good aunt is so obtrusively righteous that she is sure to expose me. And if I am to win Sorel at all I must win her to-day.’ And alas ! the day was already half over. He was not so fainthearted as to give up the game for lost ; but it was rather the instinctive aversion to a retreat than any hope of conquest which led him on. He took up her embroidery which lay upon the table, and laid it gently down again ; he opened a book, only to throw it aside ; then he smiled to himself and sighed, and wished that she would come back.

In the meantime, Sorel, in the little room above, paused with her needle in her hand, and smiled a little too, as a faint colour crept into her cheeks.

‘ He is not the least what I expected,’ she said to herself. ‘ I thought Lady Heathcote’s nephew would be commonplace. People generally are when they come home from India to inherit fortunes. But he is much more like a man who has lost one. He is not like other men. That is what I used to think of Giles Lister. I think I am glad that he is a little like him. Poor Giles ! ’

CHAPTER IV.

It was late afternoon. The quiet shadows were stealing over the river, underneath the drooping willows the insects hovered like a cloud above the water, but the western light still lay brightly on the level meadows beyond, and a boat was slowly drifting down the stream.

‘ So your life is sufficient for you ? ’ asked Giles, and he leaned forward with his head upon his hands and his eyes upon the girl’s fair face.

‘ I am not discontented,’ she answered. ‘ Why should we ask

for so much when we give so little? Are not people a little unreasonable to expect the sweet without the bitter? I have no great sorrow in my life. I work hard, it is true, for little pay; but very likely I get as much as I deserve. People generally do. If no one cares for me very much, at least no one is unkind to me. I am poor, but I can earn my own bread. It is a moderate good fortune which I do not despise.'

'And you, the only child of a rich house,' thought the young man, 'who once had no wish which could not be gratified;' and his eyes grew grave and compassionate. And he could give her nothing, unless she would give him all.

'Lady Heathcote wrote to me that she wished to keep you always with her,' he said aloud.

'Yes, but I could not accept her offer. She is very good, but, such as it is, one must have a home of one's own.'

And she thought of her little rooms on a top floor in Bloomsbury, which were so cold in winter and so stiflingly hot in summer; and yet she would go back to them cheerfully and work on in her solitude, and she smiled bravely as she leaned over the side of the boat and drew her hand through the water.

'It is impossible!' murmured Giles to himself. 'No one to care for you. It is absurd.'

They had had luncheon together at a small square table, with a bowl of fresh roses between them: a modest little repast, set out by Wilson, upon which no servant attended. Together they had gathered plums in the walled-in garden; and then, when the fierce heat of the day was over, they had unloosed the boat from its moorings. Yes, and it was already evening, but the day had not seemed long. They had become more intimate than if they had been meeting casually in other people's company for months or years.

'Never mind,' said Sorel, just catching his last observation, and she lifted her head and smiled at him, 'I care for myself, at least, perhaps too much.'

'So you do not even value friendship?'

'Indeed I do,' she cried quickly. 'Some people are always units, and I am a unit; yet I have many friends.'

'So that you do not need—you would not even accept another? However humbly I might make my offer of friendship, you would not accept it?'

Sorel drew her hand out of the water and shook the drops from it,

'Friendship must be mutual,' she said, and then she laughed and added, 'Friends, Mr. Heathcote, are not made in a day.'

'No, but lovers are,' he said to himself, and it almost seemed as if he had spoken his thought aloud, for suddenly, as he looked at her, she changed colour and her eyes went down to the water as if to evade his gaze.

He took the oars and silently sent the boat upon its way. Each leaf of the tall osiers was clearly defined against the clear pale sky. Down far away in the west a bed of billowy clouds was ready to receive the setting sun, and already he had touched their edges and turned them into gold. And all unconsciously Sorel's thoughts had gone back to another summer seven years ago, and she was not angry with Giles Lister any longer.

'We must be turning home,' she said, suddenly. 'I had forgotten the time. Your aunt will have come back already, I am afraid.'

'So am I,' muttered Giles under his breath, reluctantly turning the boat.

He was glad to see how far they were from the landing-place; yet, after all, what a short time there was left. In another half-hour his deception would be infallibly exposed, and his last chance would be over.

'Miss Leigh,' he said, summoning up his courage, and with it, as he feared, an audacity which must for ever prejudice him in her eyes, 'I wonder if you would mind my asking if you have ever forgiven my brother ?'

Some natural surprise at the question sent the blood to her face; but she would not, even for an instant, lower her eyes before him.

'Yes,' she answered, in her true and steady accents, 'I have forgiven him.'

'Was it—difficult ?'

'I found it so,' she said, softly. Yes, all these long seven years she had never forgotten, and so she had never forgiven him.

'And why?' cried the young man, eagerly. 'And why?'

It seemed as if some constraint were upon her, compelling sincerity, but indeed it was so inherent in her nature that it could not in a moment be lightly put aside.

'I suppose—because I loved him,' she answered.

A light sprang into his eyes, and it seemed as if he were about to speak, but the words died upon his lips. He felt like a man who has shut the gate of heaven against himself and hears the clang of the heavy bolts within.

'That was so long ago,' he murmured after a pause.

'Yes,' she said, 'but I have never forgotten.'

'Yet now you say that you have forgiven, and since when?'

At length, as if recalled to the present from the memory of other days, she hesitated and faltered. How could she say that it was only since this stranger had knocked at her doors, only since he had looked at her with Giles's eyes and spoken to her with his voice, that the old bitterness had passed away and the old wound had been healed?

'I—I do not know,' she said in a low voice, and bent her head in her hands.

'Do *not* forgive him.' Giles spoke with a jar in his voice; he had dropped the oars, and they neither of them noticed that they were once more drifting down the stream. 'Since you could not forgive him because you loved him, do not forgive him now.'

She looked up startled, with a questioning wonder in her eyes. His head was uncovered, and one wave of his brown hair fell across his brow. Giles's hair had the same trick, she remembered, and now looking at his hands she noticed a single signet ring she had seen before. Was she awake or dreaming; was this swift stream carrying her back to the fairyland of the past, or was it truly her faithless lover who, risen from that grave where she had buried her young hopes, was once more looking at her with eager and yet hesitating entreaty?

'I told you truly,' he said. 'Giles Lister, from whom you parted seven years ago, will never come back. But I—have come in his place.'

'You had no right!' and she started to her feet, making the boat rock beneath her. The colour flushed in her cheeks, and the indignant tears sprang to her eyes. 'I did not know. For the second time you have deceived me. I believed you. I will never believe you again.'

'Take care,' cried Giles, stretching out his hand as her slight figure swayed as if she were about to lose her balance. 'Do not upset the boat. If there is to be an atonement, remember that the occasion demands but one victim.'

She sat down again in silence. 'Take me home,' she said, but she never looked at him as she spoke, and he took the oars and pulled towards the landing-place; if their progress was slow, she was too preoccupied to observe it.

'It was a great temptation,' said Giles, presently. 'It was

my only chance, and I took it. I do not regret it. I have at least cheated time. I have robbed him of the seven hours we have spent together, and they are mine, whatever may come after. Even you cannot take them back.'

'I have nothing to say to you, Mr. Lister.' But, in truth, she was altogether bewildered, her spirits were disturbed, and her mind in confusion. In another moment she felt that she might break into useless tears or undignified laughter. The past and the present were inextricably twined together, and every minute she became more conscious that the Giles Lister whom she had known, the Giles Lister whom she had loved, was once more at her side.

'Yet you must answer me one question,' he said; 'and even though this is to be the end—though this is to be all—I shall not regret it.'

For an instant she lifted her eyes to his face, and then hastily turned away; nor did he speak again until the boat grated on the steps at the bottom of the garden.

'Must I go away?' he said. 'Sorel, that is the question.' He had taken her hand as she stepped from the boat, and still kept the slight fingers fast in his. 'Do not send me away. Some day, perhaps, I may teach you to forget that you ever saw me before. It was as I told you (you yourself taught me the parable); it was my twin.'

'And, as I should be inclined to believe, your *better self*,' cried the girl, colouring as she drew her hand away, but nevertheless breaking into a laugh. 'Oh, yes, I remember. We never speak of him.... Do not mention him to my aunt... there were circumstances; it was a resemblance which brought frequent trouble upon you.'

'Let me help you to forget the Giles Lister that you knew,' cried the young man eagerly. 'Let us bury the past.'

'It is not so easy,' she answered softly. 'Giles Lister was worldly; he was selfish; he was faithless. But—I have never forgotten him. Poor Giles!'

And she smiled at him very sweetly. He took her hand and kissed it. Protestations seemed out of place. Her goodness had even silenced his regrets.

They walked up the narrow pathway through the garden, between the sweet peas and hollyhocks, and the sun sank down behind the hills, leaving a gleam of light upon the river as they entered the house together.

The Oven Islands.

A VISIT to certain islets in the Ægean Sea, which rejoice in the name of 'the Ovens,' was undertaken by us for the purpose of archaeological research, pure and simple. Archaeologists are accused of being slightly oblivious to passing events in the great absorption of their subject; and, perhaps, that was why it never occurred to us that, whilst war was pending between Greece and Turkey, and whilst the steamers which protect the coasts of Asia Minor had been removed for fear that the Greek population should steal them, the Oven Islands, with their wealth in harbourage and distance from government control, were not the safest place for Dr. Dryasdust and his wife to pitch their tent.

There are four Oven Islands lying close together, and I believe they owe their name to certain ancient rock-cut tombs which to the inhabitants look like ovens: only one of them is inhabited, and on this there is only one village, called Kroussæ, which consists of forty houses. The inhabitants, in fact, are all members of one family, over whom the common ancestor, Captain All Holy (Panagiotes), a retired sponge-fisher, rules supreme. It was a great pleasure to us to be plunged into a society so truly patriarchal as this was; to witness the respect paid to the eighty years which weighed but lightly on All Holy's shoulders; to hear how every voice was hushed when he spoke; how at the feast his was the first song, and how his advice was law in the councils held in the village church. He told us that he had been born in the Oven Islands, and that in his youthful days only four houses existed on the island. He delighted in recounting stirring incidents of the revolution, during which time the Ovens were the hotbed of piracy. He had had many sons and daughters born to him at Kroussæ, who in their turn had so increased the population that the number of houses had of necessity been multiplied by ten.

Husbands and wives had been imported from the adjoining

island of Nikaria, where everyone knows Captain All Holy, of the Ovens, and is proud to claim relationship with him by those strange ties of kindred which puzzle the uninitiated in the Greek social system; such as, 'fellow father-in-law,' 'fellow godfather,' and the like. Captain All Holy's family had originally emigrated from Patmos, a highly respectable island, which revels in traditions of St. John; consequently the importations from Nikaria are looked down upon; for no island in these seas has a worse reputation: its inhabitants are nomad charcoal burners, and so wedded to their primitive line of life that when on one occasion a Nikariote who had made some money at Smyrna returned home, bringing with him, amongst other comforts, a four-post bed, his compatriots were so scandalised by its appearance that they dragged it into the village square and reduced it to charcoal. Evil report also says that most of those hideous deformities which beg from you on the bridges at Constantinople are manufactured by heartless parents on Nikaria; so the descendants of All Holy have probably just cause for looking down upon their consorts who hail from there.

The male descendants of Panagiotes are either shepherds or sponge-fishers, whilst the females are remarkable only for their extreme simplicity and servile obedience to their husbands. They deal largely in magic and spells, and they hoard amongst themselves superstitions which have long ceased to exist elsewhere.

Those who witnessed our arrival one stormy wet evening in April received us with great effusion: it was raining in such torrents that it was out of the question to live in our tent; it was even impossible to proceed to the village. So we took refuge for the night in a tiny coffee-shop which Captain All Holy keeps down by the shore. Fifteen souls in all were collected in this apartment, not to mention dogs, cats, and hens; and as the night came on the storm so increased in fury that none of our comforts could be brought from our boat. We dined off a tin of lobster, and then resigned ourselves to be stared at, for the space of two hours, as those only can stare whose staring appetite has never been assuaged by exhibitions and wonders from all quarters of the globe; it was a simple child-like stare which meant no rudeness, but genuine delight. They left us at last in possession of the room. I lay on my ulster and on boards; my wife reposed in her hammock; and to our manservant Matthew we generously handed over the sole and separate use of All Holy's bed and its entomological treasures. Evils in the night are doubly hard to bear, and I never remember a dawn

more acceptable than that which shone on Kroussæ towards the close of last April, with a brilliant sun to dry us and the prospect of a cleaner home.

Up in the village we secured a largish room, out of which we turned every movable thing. We hired a woman to clean it, whose only dustpan was her own petticoat, and her only brush was nearly bald. After some hours' work it was raised to the rank of an exceedingly dirty English room; but we had our own beds and bedding and our own canteen, and thus we settled down in our Oven Island home. We had four windows without any glass in them, a door opening on to an outside staircase, and Matthew slept and cooked in a dirty hole below us. Our landlady, Mrs. Peace, was one of All Holy's eldest daughters. She had had fourteen children, she told us, in her day; seven of them were still living at Kroussæ, married, and with houses of their own, and three had 'gone to Hades.' She was a bustling, stirring woman, between fifty and sixty, whose great pride was having once been to Patmos and having said her prayers in the cave of the Apocalypse. She thought herself very lucky to have secured us as tenants, and was a constant visitor.

The next day was that dedicated to St. George, a holiday of course, so no workmen were to be found who would accompany us to the proposed site of our explorations. I was exceedingly glad to see the so-called *Kápa* fires which, on the vigil of St. George, were lit at Kroussæ: it was a weird sight to see the women and children dancing around them and singing, 'Get out, ye fleas! get out, ye bugs! get out, ye mighty rats!' It is a superstition, connected, I suppose, with St. George's mythical victory over the dragon, that he has likewise power to destroy the smaller tormentors of the human race. I was told that a similar performance is gone through on St. George's other day in November; and, as circumstances turned out, I was not sorry for the opportunity of remaining for the feast day in the village.

St. George's Church, with its bell hung to a tree outside, looked very gay: it had been newly whitewashed for the occasion; its floor was strewed with myrtle and sweet-smelling herbs, and its picture of St. George was dressed up in a new piece of chintz for the occasion. As the service proceeded I looked at this picture, which represents St. George on a winged horse piercing the dragon, whilst the princess and the flocks stood trembling by; and as I looked I thought how kindred are the legends of Christendom to those of heathen days when read here on their native soil. Who is St. George but Perseus? Is not the horse Pegasus? The

princess is Andromeda, and your story is almost complete. Perseus for merry England would sound odd enough to our ears, and still odder would it be to tell the aristocracy of England that they had been married in a temple of Perseus not far from Hanover Square.

The amusements for the evening were simple but characteristic: the men assembled together in a shady garden, cut up a lamb into tiny pieces, and boiled the bits in a caldron which cast a savoury odour far and wide. When they had eaten enough, and drunk and sung songs to their hearts' content, they joined the ladies, who had hitherto only dared to peep occasionally at the lords of creation over the garden wall; and then dancing began—the strange singing dances of Nikaria, in which men and women revolve in a long wavy circle, singing as they move part-songs more monotonous than beautiful, and our earlier slumbers were disturbed by the sound of bagpipe and lyre and the discordant yells of inebriation.

We went to our work next morning, taking with us our tent, our provisions, and ten workmen; we were rowed in a boat some dozen miles to the site of our proposed excavations—a hillock by the sea, on which had formerly stood a marble temple. That we slept peacefully in our tent when the workmen left us all alone for the night, that we rejoiced in the cleanliness and solitude which surrounded us, we owed to our ignorance rather than to our courage. I fancy that if we had known of the arrival of a certain two-masted caïque in the harbour of Kroussæ that evening, and of its object, we should not have slept so well, and we should not have enjoyed our evening stroll amongst the rocks and brushwood. Luckily for us our researches were not crowned with success; the spot was not a promising one; so we decided to return to the village on the following morning. As we entered the harbour the new arrival at once arrested our attention. ‘She is quite a fine boat,’ we said to each other. ‘We must try and secure her for our return voyage,’ I innocently remarked to our boatmen; but they shook their heads mysteriously; there was evidently something wrong about her, for she had no flag and her colour of dark chocolate did not look prepossessing.

There was much confusion and secret talking when we got on shore. All Holy’s coffee-shop was full, and so was his son’s up in the village, and amongst the company we soon recognised the strangers, ill-conditioned, European-dressed men. Mrs. Peace was the first to tell us all about them. It was a well-known pirate

boat which often paid the Oven Islands a visit. Karabas, a Samiote of evil reputation, who had murdered a man in Syra only a few weeks before, was their captain, and his crew of twenty-two men were selected from amongst the greatest ruffians of the neighbouring islands. They were all armed to the teeth, and, concluded she, ‘they have even got torpedoes on board to prevent anyone from venturing alongside.’ Their object this time in visiting the Ovens was to capture the English archaeologists, and of this object they made no secret when conversing in the *café*.

Our position we at once recognised as highly critical; we hardly dared to think of the night we had spent in solitude in our tent; and our only chance of safety now lay in support from the Oven Islanders. By great good-luck, Mrs. Peace’s son-in-law had a small store close to our house, and, moreover, he had some money by him; consequently the presence of pirates disturbed him almost as much as it did us; and to this fact I firmly believe we owed the allegiance of the islanders.

Towards evening we held a council of war in the church, at which were present Captain All Holy, two of his sons, the demarch, who had married the captain’s third daughter, the two Turkish soldiers, who feebly represented their Government on the Ovens, my servant Matthew, and myself. The Greeks were loud in their protestations of good faith; the Turks merely looked on in a cynical fashion and said nothing whilst we examined their guns and pronounced them valuable only as firewood. Besides these we found that there were twelve other guns on the island, all of them more formidable in appearance than reality.

It was agreed that a little army of Oven Islanders, under the generalship of our servant, who, to our comfort, we knew was an excellent shot, should be formed for our protection. Every available weapon was to be produced, and our house was to be barricaded and surrounded by our faithful followers. Captain All Holy concluded the proceedings by stating, ‘Nothing more can be done to-night; to-morrow the demarch shall demand of Captain Karabas his papers, and state that a steamer is daily expected from Chios in pursuit of pirates.’ Greeks are always ready with a lie, and the old man’s stratagem met with universal applause.

When I reached home I found my wife and Mrs. Peace hard at work with the barricades: large stones were being carried up to our room with which to block up the windows; the door, which was decidedly a weak point, was being mended; and women were gathered in clusters outside, who, being far behind Mrs. Peace in courage, could do no more than lament the calamity which they felt sure

was impending. In spite of the circumstances we could not help laughing at the misery of Mrs. Peace's daughter-in-law, a gaunt, unkempt young woman, who was married to the storekeeper. The exigencies of the position had quite bereft her of any senses she may ever have had, and she went about exclaiming, 'O mother-in-law! Ianakki must axe the corpse.' Mrs. Peace would not explain this statement to me until I pressed her warmly, and then she told me how her daughter-in-law was only a Nikariote, and that those despised islanders believe that if a misfortune falls on anyone it is because he has been at enmity with a man who has died. The only way to avert calamity is to go at night, exhume the body, and break up the bones with an axe. The Bishop of Samos, whose spiritual jurisdiction extends to Nikaria, has nearly succeeded in putting down this miserable superstition; but in remote places like the Ovens superstition is more powerful than episcopal mandates.

At length darkness came on, and with it horrors innumerable. No one went to bed, and the whole village was wide-awake. Men in great homespun coats paraded in front of our house, and we almost felt as if we were at a play, and were incapable of realising the grim horrors of our situation. Occasionally a story I had heard of a pirate boat which in these very waters had boarded a caique, robbed the captain and his two mates, tied them to the masts, and scuttled the boat would flit across my mind; but I think at the time the novelty of our position was rather agreeable than otherwise. The noises of that night were something awful. Every dog on the island barked at the unusual disturbance; the men made use of a weird-sounding instrument they call a *bourlas*—just a thick reed hollowed out with which they are accustomed to call one another when out on the mountains or when they get separated at sea. It has a deep, unearthly sound—somewhat akin to an Australian bull-roarer—and I am sure we were more alarmed at this than at the idea of pirates.

Nothing happened during the night, and with the morning our confidence returned. With consummate cheek Karabas and some of his men not only came ashore, but came to take stock of us; and as they did so we took care to show them our six-chambered revolvers. 'Even the woman is armed,' they were overheard to say; and I doubt if this inspection of us gave them satisfaction. Matthew went to the *café* and entered into conversation with them. 'Where are they going?' was asked. 'To Patmos,' was the reply; a most deliberate falsehood, for we were bound in the other direction.

'When will they go?' Immediately was the reply. But from this conversation we gathered no encouragement, for it suggested the disagreeable idea that the pirates, finding we were so well protected in the Ovens, intended to waylay us on our voyage; and as the thought occurred to us we cursed our folly for allowing our zeal for antiquities to lead us into such a trap.

Captain All Holy's plan was crowned with apparent success; Karabas and his men took alarm at once, and by twelve o'clock that day we had the satisfaction of seeing the hated caique spread her sails and leave the harbour of the Ovens. We agreed that it would not be safe to take our departure for some days to come, for we felt sure our movements would be watched; and to ascertain the movements of the enemy we dispersed our soldiers all over the hills. Some brought back word that she had sailed for Nikaria, others that they had seen her on her way to Samos. Opinions were greatly at variance, but, notwithstanding, great ease and contentment came over us that evening, and before nine o'clock we were in bed, sleeping the sleep of the wearied.

We had not been asleep long—two hours at the most—when a loud hammering at the door below awoke us. 'The pirates are coming,' was the cry which accosted our stupefied senses. It passed rapidly from man to man, and from house to house: dogs barked, women screamed, *boureas* roared, the village of Kroussæ was a scene of the wildest confusion. General Matthew was up in no time. I never knew him undress during the three winters he has travelled with us; in fact, night garments are so little known in the Greek islands, that unless I give special orders to the contrary, the washerwomen, if they possess starch, insist on putting it into the collars and cuffs of my nightgown. He had his little army in marching order in no time, and they started off towards the cape, behind which the shepherd who had given the alarm said he had seen the pirate ship hiding. And there they found her sure enough, just in the act of sending a boatload of men to the shore.

General Matthew is a man of prompt action; so without further delay he gave orders to his men to fire, although the enemy was as yet out of reach of gunshot. The manoeuvre was attended by immediate success, for the pirates at once took alarm and rowed back to their ship; and our soldiers had not long to wait before they saw the sails unfurled again and Captain Karabas and his crew putting out once more to sea. The intentions of our enemy were obvious. They had thought to take us unawares in the night, but seeing their plan was discovered, and not wishing to run the risk of encountering so effectual an opposition as the

Oven Islanders afforded, they thought discretion the better part of valour, and sailed away.

But though we felt grateful in the extreme for our escape, and very charitably disposed towards the shepherd who had been the means of saving us, nevertheless ugly thoughts for the future confronted us : we were still on the Oven Islands, and the nearest point of safety was at least six hours' sail with a favourable wind. We could not live for ever where we were, though the inhabitants kindly expressed a wish that we should do so. The only thing for us to do, we said to ourselves over and over again, was to have patience. A little time amongst the Oven Islanders would be instructive ; there were ancient remains on the hill above Kroussæ ; we would excavate ; and we would improve our acquaintance with the inhabitants, for whom we now felt a special liking, since they had been so active in our defence ; and when we finally left the Ovens we would do so in the dark with a favourable wind behind us : and for this combination of circumstances we resigned ourselves to wait.

If it had not been for a sense of danger which we could not altogether stifle, I think we should have been thoroughly happy on the Ovens. When tired of our friends in the valley we could flee to the mountains and enjoy delicious views over the island-dotted sea. Within an easy walk of our home, high up on the hillside, was a *mandra*, that is to say, an enclosure for flocks, and adjoining it was the shepherd's hut ; and if we presented ourselves there just after the morning milking we were sure of being offered a brimming gourd of milk, and then we could watch the process of cheese-making with primitive instruments, which have in no way altered since the days of ancient Hellas. The austerities of the Lenten fast were now over, and the shepherds were busy making themselves cakes, for the recipe of which you have but to turn to the pages of Æschines, who describes certain 'cakes composed of butter, flour, and aromatic herbs,' which the islanders of his time made. I ate one of these, though it was hard and heavy, and strongly flavoured with fennel, chiefly because I wished to partake of food so truly classical ; and for the rest of our stay on the Ovens we were burdened with gifts of them from the kindly inhabitants, and the secret disposal of these, so as not to hurt the feelings of the donors, formed the object of many a mountain walk.

With a *mandra* close to us affording an abundance of milk and kids our table was never badly supplied ; of course we had no vegetables save onions and salads of mountain herbs ; and then honey was abundant, and so was fish ; but, after all, my favourite

delicacy—and I am not ashamed to own it—was snails : fresh spring snails boiled with rice mixed well with olive oil, and served with hairpins to effect the extraction, forms a dish which those who have the courage to try will never have cause to repent. One of our friends had a garden which was particularly prolific in edible snails, and we were invited to go and catch snails therein in much the same spirit that in England one is invited to a good day's fishing in a favoured stream. ‘It has horns, yet it is not a cow ; it carries a saddle, yet it is not an ass’ : this is a specimen of Oven Island wit relating to snails.

The first of May found us still prisoners on the Oven Islands ; and though getting slightly impatient of our detention we were glad to have an opportunity of seeing how gaily they decked their houses and balconies on this occasion with flowers and ears of corn ; a little festival which seems common all the world over and in all ages, a pretty homage paid to the fructifying influence of spring, as represented in the ancient world by floral offerings to Demeter. We were told, rather mysteriously, I thought, that this was the eve of St. Athanasius, but the information conveyed nothing to my mind beyond a passing recognition of the curious fact that the saint’s day, whose name signifies immortality, should be identical with a festival which is symbolical of the perpetuation of vegetable life ; and if I had not luckily noticed the young women of Kroussæ busy in conclave, as if in contemplation of some event, I fancy we should have left the Ovens without discovering that a quaint and interesting ceremony was being performed under our very noses.

The day of St. Athanasius is one of great importance to the maidens of the Ovens, for on this day, by a curious process, they divine who is to be their future husband. Elsewhere in Greece they do this on the eve of St. John’s Day, but here, for some unknown reason, they have chosen for the ceremony the two first days of May. Preparations for the divination were being made when I discovered them on the vigil of the saint. The maidens collect together in one house, each bringing a present for the girl at whose home the divination takes place. These gifts generally take the form of food for the feast on the morrow, whilst one brings meal which, when passed through a sieve, is converted into salt cakes, the use of which we shall presently discover. When all preliminaries are settled they despatch the three youngest amongst them to three of their friends who bear the name of ‘Peace,’ a curiously favourite name on the island : these three Peaces fill small jars with water from the well without speaking, and take them to

the maidens in their house ; the water is poured into a big jar, around which they sit, and cast into it flowers, gold or silver ornaments, and each maiden is careful to bear in mind the article she has thrown in. Before separating for the night this jar is put on the roof, that it may 'see the stars,' as the expression goes, and they try to do this without letting any of the young men see, for there is a tradition amongst them that on one of these occasions the young men played the annoying practical joke of stealing the ornaments, and thereby rendering the divination abortive.

The maidens all returned home when it was dark. Somehow they seemed rather ashamed of the proceeding, and I do not wonder at it. Next day at dawn they reassembled at the same house, and from this time till midday they were mysteriously engaged at their work. The doors were closed, and ingress was forbidden even to the inquisitive English ; however, we heard them singing in low monotonous voices from without, and were told that during this time they continue to stir the jar and all that was within it. Occasionally their songs would be accompanied by the beating of a brass dish, the true meaning of which mystic rite I was unable to gather from my married female informants.

When the hour of midday arrived the singing and the stirring ceased, for the time of feeding had come; and, shocking to relate, they are in the habit of drinking so much wine at this meal that they approach intoxication, and when reduced to the condition of Bacchic Mænads they eat the salt cakes and lie around the room to sleep. This is called the 'divination sleep,' and during its continuance they suppose that they have revealed to them in dreams the person of their future husband, though the name is not as yet disclosed to them. When all are awake and recovered from the effects of the meal, they again seat themselves around the jar in a circle, and sing a strange couplet, which may be roughly translated as follows :—

Awake, now, O jar, and sleep not so hard,
And by sleeping too much divination retard;
For still all the mountains are covered with snow,
And there is my love whose name I don't know.

The youngest girl is now deputed to draw out the articles from the jar one by one, and as this is done a verse is sung by each maiden in turn, which contains some punning allusion to a man's name ; for example, *vukâ ó λaós* (the people conquers) is easily understood to be Nicholas, and the girl whose article is drawn out as the verse is sung takes it to herself, ponders over it

like the ancients pondered over the utterings of a Delphic oracle, and imagines that her future husband will bear the name alluded to in the verse. With this concluding ceremony the divination of St. Athanasius is brought to an end, the doors are thrown open, and a man who plays the bagpipe is summoned to attend; no sooner are his hideous strains heard through the village than the young men begin to stroll in, and the evening, according to the invariable custom, is devoted to dancing.

We found the Oven Islanders very great people for amusements; the children, the young men, and sometimes even the old play games on the beach much as our youngsters do on the village green; and they play many games, too, which we know well in England. Is it that men's minds, when intent on sport, will arrive at pretty much the same conclusion all the world over? I think so, for I am sure that if any traveller has ever visited the Oven Islands he never took the trouble to teach the inhabitants oranges and lemons, blind man's buff, and games of a kindred nature, which we saw under different names certainly, but played in much the same fashion on the beach.

Most of the games partook of rather a bellicose nature, and bore testimony to the hardness and spirit of our friends. A game called 'war' is distinctly of this nature, and is a great favourite amongst the adult population. Two sides are chosen, the 'ups' and the 'downs,' say ten on each side, and hostile camps are pitched about thirty yards apart; having previously come to a decision as to which side is to commence firing, the general of the 'ups' marshals his men in a row, takes a ball in his hand, and when the signal for the commencement of hostilities is given hurls it with all his might on the 'downs.' If it is caught before it falls, one of the 'ups' has to go over to the camp of the 'downs' as prisoner of war; he is henceforth termed a beast of burden. They jump on his back and ride him up and down in triumph; if, however, as it frequently happens, it is not caught, the prisoner who is hit has to go from the camp of the 'downs,' and receives similar treatment. The next shot takes place from the opposite side, until not a man is left. There was always great excitement, we noticed, when only one was left in each camp, and the victory generally fell to the thrower of the ball.

Whilst their elders were thus engaged, the more juvenile portion of the population were to be seen hard by engaged in a game of an equally rough nature. Four of them, with their arms linked and their backs outwards, were dancing slowly round in a circle, singing as they went; to one of them was attached a red

girdle, the other end of which was held by another boy, whose duty was to prevent the rest of the players from jumping on the backs of those who were singing ; if anyone succeeded in doing so the boy with the girdle was defeated and gave place to another. Scarcely any of their games are without this jumping on the back as a sign of victory and humiliation to the vanquished ; rough treatment and blows naturally ensue, and all are borne with the greatest good-nature. I never once saw them squabble over this class of game ; in this point they differ from English children. It is very different, however, when money is at stake. In the game of *omades*, a form of pitch and toss, or in the *cafés*, where the men fight over their cards and labyrinth games, the disputes often take alarming proportions. In this characteristic they are Greek, and undoubtedly theirs is the sensible view to take of the matter ; squabble only when there is something substantial to be gained by so doing.

Anybody wishing for a study in Greek human nature could have no better opportunity than we had when watching these islanders on Sunday afternoon at their games by the shore. The next best place for this study is the *café*, where every bargain, however small, is transacted to the soothing warble of the narghili. One day we sent round the bellman, here called ‘the herald,’ to tell the inhabitants of the Ovens to bring to the *café* any embroideries, old plates, or curiosities that they might have in their possession ; and it was there that they tried to convince us that a rather battered English penny had been found in an ancient tomb, and that the owner had been offered a gold piece for it in Smyrna ; and yet I verily believe that if we had offered for it Turkish coins, sufficient to make a halfpenny, on the day of our departure, the owner would have run after us to the boat to effect the change.

The day, or rather night, came at last when we felt it expedient to quit our prison, and before the rising of the sun we were once more under the protection of the principality of Samos.

Apparently it was no surprise to the Samiotes when we told them that Karabas and his crew had been after us. His boat had been seen on its way to the Ovens, and our visit there was known to everyone on Samos ; but, with the usual apathy of the East, no steps were taken to pursue him until we had said some exceedingly unpleasant things to the authorities. Whether our enemy was ever caught or not we did not hear, nor do we now so much care.

On the Belfry Tower.

A SKETCH.

'**L**OOK down the road. You see that mound
Rise on the right, its grassy round
Broken as by a scar?'

We stood,
Where every landscape-lover should,
High on the gray old belfry's lead,
Scored with rude names, and to the tread
Waved like a sea. Below us spread
Cool grave-stones, watched by one great yew.
To right were ricks; thatched roofs a few;
Next came the rectory, with its lawn
And nestling schoolhouse; next, withdrawn
Beyond a maze of apple boughs,
The long, low-latticed Manor-house.
The wide door showed an antlered hall:
Then, over roof and chimney stack,
You caught the fish pond at the back,
The roses, and the old red wall.
Behind, the Dorset ridges go
With straggling, wind-clipped trees, and so
The eye came down the slope to follow
The white road winding in the hollow
Beside the mound of which he spoke.

'There,' said the Rector, 'from the town
The Roundheads rode across the down.
Sir Miles—'twas then Sir Miles's day—
Was posted farther south, and lay
Watching at Weymouth; but his son—
Rupert by name—an only one,

The veriest youth, it would appear,
Scrambling about for jackdaws here,
Spied them a league off. People say,
Scorning the tedious turret-way,
(Or else because the butler's care
Had turned the key to keep him there),
He slid down by the rain-pipe. Then,
Arming the hinds and serving-men
With half-pike and with harquebuss,
Snatched from the wainscot's overplus,
Himself in rusty steel-cap clad,
With flapping ear-pieces, the lad
Led them by stealth around the ridge,
So flanked the others at the bridge.
They were but six to half a score,
And yet five crop-ears, if not more,
Sleep in that hillock. Sad to tell,
The boy, by some stray petronel,
Or friend's or foe's—report is vague—
Was killed; and then, for fear of plague,
Buried within twelve hours or so.

‘ Such is the story. Shall we go?
I have his portrait here below :
Grave, olive-cheeked, a Southern face.
His mother, who was dead, had been
Something, I think, about the Queen,
Long ere the days of that disgrace,
Saddest our England yet has seen.
Poor child! The last of all his race.’

AUSTIN DOBSON.

Marrying and Giving in Marriage.

BY MRS. MOLESWORTH,
AUTHOR OF 'HATHERCOURT RECTORY,' 'CARROTS,' &c.

CHAPTER XI.

A VELINE woke the next morning with a terrible headache. Unusual emotion or exertion was apt to result in this species of suffering with her. Many a time as a child, when some lesson difficulty—for, though gifted with intellectual capacity considerably above the average, she was not a quick or very ready learner—or sharp reprimand from her mother had sent her sobbing to bed, had the morning found her so overwhelmed with pain as to be for the time unable to take in the sense of anything said to her.

This was the case the day after her strange and painful interview with Sir Francis Ayrton.

It was 'most unfortunate,'—'tiresome and provoking' were the real words in her heart—said Lady Christina when Lady Ayrton called, as had been arranged, to drive Aveline and her mother on a round of shopping. 'She has not had such a headache for years. I saw it coming on the day before yesterday, at the marriage. Foolish child, she is far too impressionable. She was quite upset by seeing the ceremony.'

'Poor dear—I love her all the more for it,' said Lady Ayrton. 'But you will not like to leave her then, Christina? We must put off our expedition till to-morrow or the day after.'

'Oh, no,' Aveline's mother replied; 'she is best left alone in perfect quiet. I understand these headaches. I believe they can be thrown off by a person of great energy and resolution. I myself should be often ill if I let myself be so. But Aveline is different. She has much more of the Verney *laissez aller* about her. Why, both my husband and Bart Verney go down like lead

if one of their little fingers aches. And Avé is just the same. They think themselves dying on the smallest provocation.'

'But Aveline does not feel so ill as all that, I trust?' said Lady Ayrton, anxiously. 'Should you not send for the doctor, Christina? It may be the beginning of typhoid fever, or gastric fever, or who knows what.'

'Oh, no, I have seen her too often like that. She will be all right in a day or two, or even sooner if she can get a good sleep. Leo is watching beside her. I assure you the only thing to do is to leave her alone. I am really not uneasy, Sophia.'

Of which Sophia was already only rather too well assured.

'And what is Wilfred about this morning?' said Lady Christina, amiably, as she settled herself comfortably in her friend's luxurious landau. Material well-being always had a soothing effect upon the nerves of Aveline's mother. 'I thought he spoke of coming with us.'

'So he did,' said his mother. 'But he put his head in at the door of my room while I was dressing to come out, to say he could not possibly come. He was shut up with his father for some time this morning. They are busy arranging all about Garthdean—the tiresome part of it, I mean. The *nice* part will come afterwards. I expect Sir Francis will give Aveline *carte blanche* about refurnishing it.'

'How delightful,' exclaimed Lady Christina, with effusion. 'Dear Sir Francis, how very generous he is!'

Poor woman! a very few hours sufficed to bring a dolorous change over the spirit of her dream.

That afternoon, Mr. Verney was summoned to a private talk with Sir Francis Ayrton. At dinner-time he was silent and pre-occupied in manner, but a very close observer might have detected a shade less of anxiety in his expression than had been there of late.

'How is Avé?' he asked, somewhat abruptly, of his wife.

'Oh, it will go off by the morning, I have no doubt,' she replied easily. 'She seemed asleep quietly enough an hour or two ago.'

'If she is not decidedly better to-morrow morning, you must send for a doctor,' said Mr. Verney. 'She has not spoken to you much to-day?'

'Not at all,' said Lady Christina. 'She seemed just to want to stay quiet. She is always like that when she has these headaches.'

Mr. Verney said nothing for a minute or two. Then—dinner was nearly over by now—he looked up again.

'Christina,' he said, 'I have a good deal to talk to you about this evening. Can you arrange to be quite uninterrupted?'

'Certainly,' she replied, with some surprise. 'Is it about the settlements on Aveline? Sophia told me Sir Francis would be wanting to talk over business matters with you some day soon.'

'He sent for me this afternoon, but it was not to talk about the settlements,' said her husband. 'However, we had better go into the drawing-room.'

He rose as he spoke, and held open the door for his wife to pass through.

Lady Christina's maid was surprised and rather offended that evening by the peremptory way in which she was rung for, only to be told that she was not required and might go to bed.

'There's something hup,' she said to herself, as she slowly mounted the *escalier de service* to the *sixième*, where, on condition of a handsome present on their return to England, she had agreed to sleep, instead of rushing back to London the day of their arrival, as she had at first threatened. 'And I don't see as my lady need be so short with me, considering the hinterest I feel in the family—especially in Miss Verney, poor dear. There'll be something to be thankful for if she's not down with typhud fever, as it's called nowadays. And no wonder if it were, with these queer ways of living—families one on the top of another like berths in a steamer—which it stands to reason can't be wholesome.'

She was not a bad-hearted woman, and Lady Christina was not a bad mistress, and she could hardly have helped pitying Aveline's mother had she seen her, as she then was—sobbing, weeping bitter tears of disappointment at the news her husband had told her, that her daughter's engagement to Wilfred Ayrton was once for all and irrevocably broken off.

'And what are we to do about Chris—and all the other troubles?' had been her first exclamation, when she had realised the terrible fact.

'I don't know. I can't say. But at least we shall not have sold—yes, *sold*—our daughter, Christina,' was his reply.

He had promised Sir Francis, for Aveline's sake, to say nothing to stir up any avoidable bitterness on his wife's part. And except for this one outburst, he had controlled himself well.

Lady Christina burst into tears.

'How can you speak so cruelly?' she sobbed out. 'You know my motives, Owen. I only want to do the best for our children.'

'Then be thankful that Fate, or Providence, has thwarted what could never have turned out a best for the eldest, and I can almost say, the dearest of them,' he replied sternly.

'I cannot help feeling as if it were Aveline's fault,' she said to herself afterwards, when alone, 'though I have given my word not to resent it to her. And perhaps she is not to blame. It must be something seriously wrong with Wilfred Ayrton for his own father to take part against him, as it were. But it might as well have waited to come out till they were married. For then, whatever it had been, they would have had to take care of Aveline. No, I cannot help it. I *do* feel as if it were her doing, and I must not show it. After all my exertions for her, it is *too hard*.'

She was not of a temperament to sob herself to sleep like her daughter, she lay awake nearly all the night, longing for the morning, and was up and about earlier than usual, finding in restless energy only any relief from her aching disappointment.

The first post brought a letter from her friend. Its handwriting was of the shakiest; it was blurred and blotted with tears.

'You will know by your own feelings what I am suffering,' wrote poor Lady Ayrton—'or rather you cannot know. Without selfishness I must say it is far, far worse for me than for you. It seems to me that till now I had never realised to the full what hopes I had built on the project so cruelly dashed to pieces. But I have promised Francis to say very little, and it is true it would be useless. We are leaving Paris almost immediately. I shall look forward to seeing you, dearest Christina, in England before long, when perhaps a little time may have soothed the present bitterness of regret.'

'Worse for her than for me, indeed,' said Lady Christina. 'Sophia is more than half a fool, but that I always knew. Worse for her than for me, indeed! Has she seven children, and none of them provided for in any way; an income on which it is *impossible* to live; a husband who has no sympathy, and is as obstinate as a mule once he takes up a notion? It's no worse for her about her son than it has always been. Every one has known since he was a schoolboy that he was a coarse, selfish young brute, and Sophia need not pretend to have discovered his delinquencies for the first time. But I must answer it, I suppose; and by-the-bye, I had better go and see how Aveline is, as she particularly asks for news of her.'

For, in a postscript, Lady Ayrton entreated to be told if ‘dear Aveline’s’ headache had left her.

It had not done so. She was very little, if at all better than the day before. Lady Christina began to feel a little anxious. Provoked and irritated as she was, she could not but be conscious of a pang of pity as Aveline looked up with her sad, tired eyes, as if apologising for being ill, and tried to say she was better.

‘I am so sorry, mamma,’ she whispered, the tears welling out as she said it. With the rupture of her engagement, with the knowledge of the keenness of her mother’s disappointment—for Leonora had noticed enough at breakfast that morning to be able to assure her sister that ‘mamma knew’—the hard cold indignation of the last few weeks had melted away. She felt herself to be, as it were, deserving of Lady Christina’s wrath; weak and worn out by all she had gone through, she was almost ready to fall back into the old groove of well-nigh slavish submission.

‘I don’t mind how harsh mamma is to me,’ she said to Leo. ‘I will bear anything, I am so sorry for her; and the worst of it is I know I must *always* now be a source of disappointment to her. For I don’t think I shall ever marry, Leo—and that is the only thing I could have done to please her. If I could—if I might but work for her and for you all! Oh, if only I were a man!’

But such thoughts only aggravated her suffering—and then the terrible headache, except at rare intervals, almost deadened her. She was to be kept perfectly quiet at all costs, the doctor said, otherwise he would not answer for the consequences. And Leo, a born sick-nurse, managed to soothe her by saying they would talk it all over afterwards, there was no telling what plans they might not think of for really helping poor mamma—what Avé had to do now was to lie still and try to get well.

And by slow degrees the pain began to decrease, and the symptoms of brain disturbance to disappear.

‘She will do now,’ said the doctor, ‘provided, that is to say, you continue to keep her out of the way of any excitement. A change to the country would be the best thing if you could possibly manage it.’

And Mr. Verney, as he kissed his daughter, telling her cheerily that all would be right, now that she was going to be a sensible girl and get well, wished indeed it were possible.

But material cares were pressing heavily on him, poor man, at this time. A few weeks would bring his mission to Paris to an end, and it was already only too clear that the expenses of the

family sojourn there would be considerably in excess of the extra pay. It had been found absolutely necessary to place Chris with a private crammer, if he were to have any hope of passing his examination for Woolwich ; and Arthur, the second boy, would be leaving school at Midsummer, and nothing had been decided as to his career. Then the younger ones, there was no denying, were ‘coming on’ at an alarming rate. And Bart Verney, the kindest of brothers, had done all he could, more almost than he was justified in doing. Where to turn for help to tide over the present crisis Lady Christina’s husband truly did not know.

In any case country air for Aveline was out of the question.

‘ She will go back to London looking infinitely worse than when she came away. I wish I had come over here alone and left them all safe at home. It would have saved some money, too, and this wretched business would never have come about,’ thought the father, though in the bottom of his heart he was not without a shrewd suspicion that this very ‘business’—the prospect of its coming to pass, that is to say—had been at the root of Lady Christina’s determination to transport the whole family across the Channel.

But there is great comfort in the truism that at the worst things must take a turn. They had got to the worst apparently by this time with the Verneys. For just as Aveline began to creep about again, thin and languid, grateful with a half-shrinking gratitude, painful to see, for her mother’s somewhat grudgingly-bestowed kindness, and Lady Christina had added up the Paris bills for the twentieth time in vain hopes that she had over-estimated their amount, down came a good fairy in the shape of faithful old Madame de Boncœur, full of sympathy, curiosity, genuine concern, and, most valuable of all, practical readiness to help.

‘ I have known nothing,’ she said. ‘ Since the marriage a fortnight ago’—was it only a fortnight ago? thought Aveline, from her sofa in the corner of the room—‘ Alice and I are at Château Villers, her little place near Montmorenci—shut up, seeing no one. We wanted a rest, and we missed the child—and she and Maurice came to us for two nights. Now they are with his people, and will join us next week, and we shall all go together to Bourgogne next month. Just now we only come into Paris for a day now and then. But why did you not write, Christine, to tell us of this poor darling’s illness? It was not treating us like true friends, my child.’

Lady Christina glanced at her daughter.

'I thought of writing,' she said, 'but so much has happened. I have been so busy and so terribly engrossed. Then Aveline's illness seemed to put everything wrong.'

'Naturally,' said the old lady. 'But, still, things might be worse. The child is getting better. It is not like you to lose heart, Christine.'

For all answer Lady Christina threw her arms round her old friend's neck and burst into tears.

'No,' she said, 'I don't think things could be much worse.'

Aveline was terribly startled. She had never before seen her mother cry—'not like that, at least,' she told Leo afterwards; and the tears of a hard, practical, unemotional nature, when they do come, are painful to see.

'Mamma,' she said, 'dear mamma,' and she tried to get up and cross the room. But the words were faint, and the effort to speak seemed to choke her. In another moment she had fallen back on the sofa unconscious.

It was not a very bad faint, it was but the natural result of the agitation in the girl's weakened state. But it frightened Lady Christina thoroughly. Never since her childhood had Aveline known her mother so genuinely anxious and tender.

'It is like when I was little and had the measles, mamma dear,' she whispered, when she was, comparatively speaking, well again and able to be left in Leo's charge, while her mother went off with Madame de Boncœur for the good talk on which the old lady insisted.

'She is very weak, the poor child,' said she, shaking her head sagely, when she found herself alone with Christina.

'Yes. The doctor says she should have country air. But it is impossible. We shall be returning to London in less than three weeks, and I have so much upon me to see about already. It is quite impossible.'

'I don't know about that,' said the old lady. 'But first—tell me more, my dear Christine. You said much had happened, and I can see it has not been of a pleasant kind. Tell me all. I have known you nearly all your life. I am an old woman, and—I am a rich woman, Christine. Do not have any false pride.'

For she was a very shrewd old woman too. She guessed pretty correctly that no troubles were so likely to overcome Christina so completely as those connected with money.

And Lady Christina told her all—all, that is to say, that she

herself knew. For as to the exact nature of the causes of the rupture of Aveline's engagement, Sir Francis Ayrton and Mr. Verney had determined to be silent.

'There were disgraceful things that came out about the young man. I do not know all the particulars, and of course Aveline will never know. Owen and Sir Francis had an interview, and Aveline had already got frightened by something she had overheard. I don't know exactly how it was. I was forbidden to talk to her about it. She was already ill. But all was given up. It had to be. His poor mother feels it terribly.'

'Yes,' said Madame de Boncœur, 'it is of course much worse for her than for you.'

'That is what she said,' replied Lady Christina, in some surprise. 'Do you think so too? I cannot see it. It is no case of pounds, shillings, and pence to *them*,' she added, with a bitterness which prevented the coarseness of the speech from being too conspicuous. But to the practical, matter-of-fact old Frenchwoman it would not in any case, perhaps, have appeared in that light.

'No,' she agreed, 'that is true. And such cases are very serious; but still, Christine, they are not the worst. But tell me all, my dear. Is it anything new about your sons?'

It was a great relief to Lady Christina to be able to unbosom herself of all her troubles to so kind and sympathising a listener. Madame de Boncœur remained more than an hour closeted with her, and when the old lady left, it was with the kindest '*au revoir* then, till to-morrow, when I will call for Aveline.'

And Lady Christina's face looked ten years younger when she rejoined her daughters.

'She is the best and kindest woman in the world,' she exclaimed with, for her, rare effusiveness. 'Aveline, you are sure to get well now. Madame de Boncœur is coming to fetch you to-morrow to take you out to the country for ten days or so. And you will see Modeste; she and her husband are to be at Château Villers next week—you will like that?'

'Yes, indeed, mamma,' Aveline replied, while a faint colour rose to her pale cheeks, 'there could be nothing I should like so much. And I shall get quite strong, you will see, and come back able to help you with all you will have to do when the time comes for going home. Mamma, dear,' she went on, with a touching appeal in her voice, 'you have been so kind to me—you will let me be a very useful daughter to you now? It is all I can do.'

' You must get strong first of all,' said Lady Christina. Her tone was a little hard; but Aveline did not mind; it was a good deal not to be answered, as she often had been, with chilling contempt.

' Aveline,' said her mother, when Leonora had left the room, ' I have not told you all that that good kind friend has done. She has given me a cheque for ten thousand francs—four hundred pounds, Aveline. She insisted on it; she wanted even to make it more; she made me tell her all our anxieties. This will tide over the present difficulties, and if only Chris gets through, the worst will surely be over.'

' Oh, mamma, how good of her!' exclaimed Aveline.

' She is my oldest friend in the world, it is true. That takes away the feeling of obligation,' said Lady Christina.

But Aveline thought to herself that not many 'oldest friends in the world' would be capable of such thoughtful generosity.

The next day saw Aveline safely installed at the Château de Villers under the kind care of Madame de Boncœur and her daughter.

And that same day Sir Francis and Lady Ayrton left Paris for London. Their son was to have accompanied them, but an hour or two before they were to leave, a letter was brought to Sir Francis by a special messenger.

' What's this?' he said impatiently. ' Some bill, I suppose. You told me you were certain everything was settled?' he went on, turning to the courier.

' I am quite sure of it, sir,' he replied. ' It may, perhaps, be something of Mr. Ayrton's,' he added in a lower voice.

' If so, I have nothing to do with it, and it should not be addressed to me,' said Sir Francis, as he proceeded to open it. The writing was not like that of a tradesman—of a French tradesman especially—and the name and title were correctly given in the English way.

Sir Francis's face changed as he read the opening words. It changed still further as he read on. Finally, a grim smile, half cynical, half contemptuous, settled on to his face.

' I suppose it is what one might have expected,' he said; ' I suppose it *might* have been worse—it *might* have been a barmaid or a ballet-girl—and in this case, at least, if it is so one does not know it. But oh, spirits of my ancestors of Ayrton Manor and Garthdean!'

There was no time, however, for indulgence in reflections, cynical or otherwise. Lady Ayrton at that moment entered the room.

'All is ready. I hope you are feeling pretty well, Francis. But I cannot imagine what has become of Wilfred. He went out very early indeed this morning and has not come back. But all his things are packed, Irving says.'

Irving was Mr. Ayrton's own man.

'Ah!' said Sir Francis, and again the grim smile overspread his face. 'Sophia, try to be sensible and not excite yourself; listen quietly, my poor dear.'

It was long since her husband had addressed her so sympathisingly. Lady Ayrton thought something very dreadful must be coming. She grew deadly pale, and clutched at the table to support herself, but she endeavoured to remain calm.

'What—what is it, Francis? What has happened to Wilfred? Has he had an accident? Is he—oh, no, you could not smile in that way if it were so.'

'Read this for yourself. You see it is his own writing,' said Sir Francis.

And, so far reassured, Lady Ayrton read as follows:—

'MY DEAR FATHER,—

'I did my best, as you and my mother know, to marry to please *you*. It isn't my fault that that affair came to grief. I now write to tell you that by the time you get this I shall have married to please myself. The lady is Miss Lucilla Greenflier; my mother will remember having seen her. I shan't trouble you about money matters—she has lots for us both—so I can leave all that to you. There was such a lot of bother about the other affair that I and Lucilla settled to manage all for ourselves. She's the handsomest girl I've seen for a long time, and just the sort to suit me.'

'Your affectionate son,

'WILFRED T. AYRTON.'

'P.S.—Irving knows what to do with my things.'

'Address Hôtel des Etats Unis, Bâle, till further notice.
Bon voyage, in which Lucilla joins.'

Lady Ayrton's pale lips moved, but no word escaped them.

'Come now, my dear Sophia, don't take on, as the old women say,' said Sir Francis, kindly, but much in the tone he would have used to a child. 'I assure you it might have been worse. You've seen the girl?'

'Yes,' half whispered Lady Ayrton, 'the very worst style of American. A great strapping creature, fearfully over-dressed. Handsome—yes, I suppose so.'

'She'll keep him in order,' said Sir Francis, with a grim chuckle. 'She's a sharp young woman. No doubt she satisfied herself that enough of the property is entailed to secure his position, and beyond that she probably does not care. They are rich; I have heard of them. So she has bought herself a title—and a precious young scamp as a husband. But I am very much mistaken if Master Wilfred's haleyon days of liberty are not at an end.'

'What shall you do?' asked Lady Ayrton.

'Do? Just what we were going to do—cross to-day, and when we get to town send for Daunt'—his lawyer—'and talk it over with him. He must satisfy himself that the marriage is perfectly regular, probably interview the lady or her guardians, if she has any, and find out what she has, if she chooses to tell. Then I must give him a fitting allowance, and—'

'Not Garthdean,' interrupted his wife; 'somehow it would seem to me unendurable—that American parvenu installed at Garthdean.'

'I agree with you,' said Sir Francis; 'no, they shall not have Garthdean, nor any of the landed property that is not entailed. I must consider things over. There are my cousin Lionel's boys—very decent fellows, I believe. And as to ourselves, Sophia, for the short time it will probably be, we shall be more at peace, I trust. I shall try to be more patient.'

Lady Ayrton's tears were dropping by now.

'Don't speak of a short time, Francis. Remember—you are all I have now.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE summer had come and gone. It had been a hot one, even in England, but by the end of September stormy weather set in suddenly. A traveller arriving at Boulogne very early one morning from the south was met, to his annoyance, by the announcement that the tidal packet was not crossing.

'What a nuisance!' he exclaimed in French. 'I must go on to Calais, I suppose, by the next train,' for he had got out of the railway carriage before hearing the news, and the train was already moving out of the station.

'Monsieur will have plenty of time to rest himself and eat at the hotel close to the station,' said insinuatingly an employé

from that same hotel, hanging about the station on the look-out for waifs and strays stranded there by the unusual state of things. ‘Monsieur will find it very comfortable. We have already several rooms occupied by travellers. A poor English milord is very ill; the rough crossing yesterday knocked him up. They were obliged to remain, he, and madame, and the servants. He is very ill, I fear. I was sent for the doctor at midnight.’

The two, the Englishman and the hotel emissary, were by this time in the street, the latter carrying the stranger’s rugs and dressing-bag. The gentleman was tired and sleepy; he had come straight through from Madrid, and the chatter of his companion passed by almost unheeded. Suddenly a word caught his attention.

‘Sir Ayrton,’ the man was saying. ‘He is perhaps a friend of Monsieur’s, being a compatriot.’

‘Sir——, what name did you say? You don’t think all Englishmen are friends, do you? But what name did you say?’

‘Ayrton,’ repeated the man, giving it the French pronunciation. ‘Sir Ayrton, I can spell it for monsieur,’ which he proceeded to do.

He had seen by the style of travelling of the invalid and his wife that they were people of wealth, and their sudden arrival at the hotel, and the excitement of the whole affair, had made considerable sensation. He was in a frame of mind very open to ‘pour-boires,’ and delighted to have at last attracted the newcomer’s attention.

A respectable, staid-looking personage, bearing courier in every feature of his face and line of his figure, was crossing the entrance of the hotel as they went in.

‘And the poor gentleman, how is he? Anything more that I can fetch for him?’ inquired the commissionnaire, or whatever he was, obtrusively.

The courier stopped short and looked at him.

‘The doctor will be coming again directly,’ he said, ‘just wait about till he does. I want him to advise madame to send for a *garde-malade*. There are such to be got here, I suppose?’

‘Oh yes, doubtless. The sisters are in the next street,’ replied the man.

The stranger in his turn accosted the courier.

‘I fancy I have seen you before,’ he said. ‘Are you—were you in attendance on Sir Francis Ayrton last spring in Paris?’

The poor courier’s face, which had been clouded with anxiety, brightened up.

'Ah, yes, sir, I am with him six months of every year. But we have never had such a catastrophe before. He *would* cross yesterday, though my lady and I begged him not, and he has nearly, if not quite, killed himself. And here we are, quite alone, and my lady so upset, and the maid no use. May I ask your name, sir? It would be a great comfort to my lady to meet with a friend. I, too, remember your face, I think, sir.'

The gentleman began rummaging in his coat-pocket—he drew out a card.

'Here,' he said, 'take this to Lady Ayrton, with my compliments. If she would like to see me, I am quite at her service.'

Luigi hastened upstairs; he was too well-bred to study the card in its owner's presence, but he had no sooner reached the landing than he set himself to do so.

'Mr. Nigel Hereward!' he exclaimed. 'Ah! to be sure; I have it now. "Secrétaire à l'Ambassade de S. M. Britannique." To be sure. He was then at Paris—now, it appears, at Madrid. What a piece of good fortune.—Ah, my lady,' he continued, as he opened the door of a sitting-room, 'good news,' and his thin, dark, kindly face gleamed.

'Has the doctor been again? Does he think him better?' exclaimed Lady Ayrton, starting up from the sofa, where she had been persuaded to take a little rest.

'No, no, my lady. Sir Francis is sleeping quietly. The doctor has not returned. It is that I have met a friend of your ladyship's—a gentleman now in the hotel; he sends this, and would be enchanted to be of any service.'

With which rather flowery translation of Mr. Hereward's simple message, he held out the card.

Lady Ayrton took it eagerly.

'Nigel Hereward,' she exclaimed. 'Oh, I am indeed very thankful. Beg him to come up at once, if he will, Luigi.'

The courier had disappeared almost before she had finished the sentence. Two minutes more brought a knock at the door, followed by a 'May I come in?' in a remembered voice.

The poor lady hurried forward, both hands outstretched.

'Oh, Mr. Hereward,' she cried. 'You don't know how thankful I am to see the face of a friend. I am in such trouble; has Luigi told you? I—I don't know what to think of Sir Francis, or what the doctor really thinks,' and her voice broke down, as if the tears she had evidently been shedding were not far off. 'I am afraid he is very ill, he is so very—so patient, and

gentle, and subdued. I would give anything to hear him scolding a little,' she added with a wintry smile.

Nigel's sympathy was at once aroused.

'I am so sorry for you,' he replied cordially. 'It was the bad crossing, your courier told me.'

'Yes; Sir Francis never will consent to give up, once we have started, and he could not believe it would be so bad. And he was almost knocked over, and dreadfully shaken. He fainted on the boat—we thought we should never get him here. And the doctor won't tell me exactly what he thinks.'

'And you are alone? Will you not telegraph to—to your son? Can I do that for you?' he asked.

'To tell you the truth, I am by no means sure where they are. They are terrible gad-abouts,' she said, with another little attempt at a smile. 'And I should not care to send for Wilfred unless his father expressed a wish for him. You see, we do not know his wife, and I am certain Sir Francis could not endure to have her here. And if he came, she would come too. She never leaves him—I must say she seems to be a good wife. But—it would never do for her to come.'

Mr. Hereward felt and looked completely bewildered.

'You do not know Mrs. Ayrton,' he said, 'not know Av—Miss Verney?'

Lady Ayrton grew crimson.

'Did you not know?' she said. 'Have you not heard of our sad disappointment? That *was* to have been, but it fell through. My son married an American. And to you, an old friend like you, Mr. Hereward, I may say for once what I feel is due to her—to that sweet girl. My son was not good enough for her. But it was to us a most sad disappointment.'

Mr. Hereward bowed as gravely as if the fact of Wilfred Ayrton's 'not being good enough for her' were an entirely new suggestion. And no one would have suspected from the perfect calm of his outward demeanour the rush of joy that had filled his heart at Lady Ayrton's explanation.

'It is not that *I* am any the more likely to win her,' he reflected. 'But, at least, there is not that awful feeling of desecration, as it were, connected with her now. The thought of her marrying that fellow was too unendurable. And after all—' his thoughts ran on in a kind of recklessness, the result of the reaction from the under-lock-and-key condition in which all these months he had held them. 'After all, we are neither of us old

yet—"while there is youth," at least, "there is hope." Who knows what may happen?

Perhaps some night,
When new things happen, a meteor-ball
May slip through the sky.

Who knows? At least, I can think of her again now; and how little this morning did I imagine *that* would be the case before night?

And all this time poor Lady Ayrton was meandering plaintively on with the stories of her woes, firmly believing that Mr. Hereward was giving her his full attention. Her voice stopping at last brought him to himself with a shock. But before he had time to risk her discovery of his abstraction by a random answer, a tap at the door made them look round. It was Luigi again.

"My master, Sir Francis, is awake. I told him of Monsieur—Mr. Hereward being here. He begs to see you, sir, at once."

"Oh, Luigi," said Lady Ayrton, tremulously, "do you think you have done right? Has it not excited him terribly?"

"Not at all, not at all, my lady," Luigi exclaimed eagerly. His eyes were gleaming and his face brimful of satisfaction. "You will see, it will do him more good than anything. If Monsieur will accompany me——"

"As I am?" said Nigel. "I've been travelling all night and I've been smoking. I'm not very fit for an invalid's room."

"It will not matter, he is so impatient," urged Luigi.

So Nigel gave in and followed the courier down the long passage.

"Sir Francis's own man had preceded us to Cannes to get all in order there," Luigi went on. "We have always done thus when we made the journey through, staying but one night in Paris, and never before has there been a *contretemps*."

He opened a door, and Nigel entered the darkened room. At first he could scarcely distinguish Sir Francis's features—his face was as white as the pillows on which his grey, almost white, hair made but a faint shadow.

"I am grieved," began Mr. Hereward, gently lifting the thin hand feebly held out.

"I am so delighted to see you," interrupted Sir Francis, cheerily, "I cannot think of anything else. Tell me, Hereward, are you *very* pressed for time? Where are you bound for? Can you delay your journey a few hours?"

Nigel reflected—he was too considerate to make any rash promise on the spur of the moment's feeling.

'I think I can,' he said. 'I am going home on a few weeks' leave; but a day or two more or less is not of vital importance. There is a marriage—my sister-in-law's sister's—they wanted me to be at, but I don't think it would much matter. Home, in the strict sense of the word, you know, I have none.'

'You are very good,' said Sir Francis. His voice sounded even feebler than in the first flush of eager greeting. 'I will tell you what I want of you. The doctor here is a fool—not professionally, perhaps—indeed, I fancy he is sharp and clever. But he will not tell me the truth about myself. I want you to see him and get it out of him. As far as I can judge by former attacks, though I have never had so bad a one as this, it is a question of the next few hours. If the worst symptoms lessen within that time there is a chance of my pulling through till the next attack (I shall not live through *another*, of that I feel sure), and I should like you to stay till this is decided, so that she, my poor wife, may not be utterly alone. But, above all, if there is this chance, don't, for Heaven's sake! telegraph for any one yet. Let that be at the *very* last—you understand?' his voice was growing almost inaudible.

Nigel bowed his head.

'I will go and see the doctor at once,' he said. 'In the meantime, try to keep quiet—you will do so, will you not, dear sir?'

Sir Francis smiled faintly.

'It will be easier now,' he said. 'I shall do my best. I don't want to die here—at least let it be in my own house.'

And Mr. Hereward, entering with quick instinct and sympathy into the invalid's feelings, went off at once to the doctor, whom, by good luck, he found at home. When he left the doctor's house it was to go to the telegraph office. But the telegram was to none of the Ayrton belongings. It was to his own brother, and to the effect that he might be detained some days at Boulogne, and expressing his regret at not being able to be present at the marriage.

Then he returned to the hotel and made his way cautiously upstairs. A very slight tap at the door brought Luigi, eager and alert as ever.

'Not asleep?' whispered Nigel.

'No, no—anxious to see you,' said the courier, opening the door. Mr. Hereward entered and approached the bed.

'Sir Francis,' he said at once and without preamble, 'I have seen the doctor. It is as you thought. You have a good chance of pulling through if the next few hours bring no aggravation of the bad symptoms.'

'That is better than I thought,' said Sir Francis.

'It is the truth, exactly. But even if all goes well, you must keep yourself absolutely quiet, free from *all* agitation for some days to come. And that you may feel more at rest—you kindly said my being here was a satisfaction—I have telegraphed home to Roderick that I shall be detained here some days—in fact,' he added, with a smile, 'as long as you want me.'

A mist came over the eyes of the sick man.

'Hereward, you are very good—I cannot thank you enough. And it is not the first time. You did your best for that graceless boy at school. I am heavily in your debt.'

'Don't put it that way,' said Nigel; 'it is a pleasure. Let me see you do all you can to get well by keeping quiet.'

'I will, I will,' Sir Francis replied.

'Good God,' he murmured to himself as Nigel left the room, 'why could I not have had a son like that?'

And not till he had seen Lady Ayrton, and, after explaining to her the real state of things, had persuaded her to go to bed and try to sleep for some hours, promising that she might then sit up all night with Sir Francis if she liked, did Mr. Hereward remember that he was both hungry and tired himself.

The next few days passed like a curious dream to Nigel. Here he was installed almost in the place of a son to the parents of the man whom less than a week ago he had at once envied and hated with an intensity which it now appalled him to realise—nay, he had been near to hating Sir Francis and his wife themselves. He had tried and longed to hate Aveline, and imagined that he had succeeded in despising her. And now any pretext even for that mitigated form of hatred was taken from him.

For Sir Francis, once his convalescence was established, had made good use of his time. He had confided to Nigel much, though not all, of what had passed in Paris after the young man had left, and in so doing he had made himself master of a secret he had long been curious to know.

'Yes,' he said one day, 'she is one of the best and sweetest girls possible. Where she erred it was from good though mistaken motives, and—'

'Her father is a man I have the greatest respect for,' interrupted Nigel. He could not bear to hear Aveline's conduct

discussed, even by Sir Francis. 'It is only a pity he lets the reins slip so much out of his own hands.'

Sir Francis smiled urbanely.

'But with a Lady Christina for a wife, my dear fellow—' he said deprecatingly. 'Shall you see them when you go over?' he inquired.

Mr. Hereward shook his head.

'I hardly think so,' he replied. 'One is never sure of seeing any one at this time of year, and I shall scarcely stay in town at all. Besides, my leave is very short. My brother wanted to see me about business matters of his own, otherwise I should have preferred to wait till later and get a longer holiday.'

'And short as your time was I have made it still shorter,' said Sir Francis, regretfully.

'Pray don't speak of it so,' said the young man. 'I am so very pleased, so thankful to have been of use—as you *will* say I have been,' he added with a smile.

'It is not only I that say so; ask Luigi, ask the doctor. I began to turn the corner from the moment I knew there was some one reliable at hand. That first night was horrible,' he went on, with a shudder, 'when I came to myself and found where I was, and imagined myself dying here, and Wilfred and that American swooping down upon us and having things all their own way, and poor Sophia quite helpless and alone. No, if I get through this winter, and get home again for another summer, I shall be more than thankful, and I shall never leave home again.'

But his 'getting through the winter' and seeing home again seemed a very doubtful prospect in the eyes of Mr. Hereward the morning he at last saw his friends off to Paris, and he was somewhat surprised at every one else not sharing his misgivings.

'You really think he will live to get to Cannes,' Mr. Hereward asked anxiously when the train had moved out of the station and he turned to say good-bye to the doctor, who had accompanied him to see them off.

'Oh yes, oh dear yes,' he replied. 'He may go on pretty comfortably until another attack—and that, as he seems to feel himself, will be the last. But that may not be for long—a year, two years, who knows? It is you who have done the most to get him round this time,' he added politely.

So, for more reasons than one, Mr. Hereward did not regret the storm which had weather-bound him that September day at Boulogne.

CHAPTER XIII.

SEPTEMBER again, but early September, and a very different scene from the storm-tossed Boulogne coast a year ago. It is as sunny and warm as midsummer; such things as wind and tempest must surely be altogether unknown in this sheltered corner of old France, where one could picture the peaceful lives of the inhabitants droning on one-century after another with little change or excitement.

'I do love this terrace so much. It must be warm and sheltered even in winter,' said the taller of two girls who were sauntering up and down a wide gravelled walk running along one side of an old château. There were broad shallow steps both upwards and downwards from the terrace, and great green-painted boxes containing orange-trees at regular intervals, and down below, here and there among the trees, which made a sort of miniature forest on this side of the house, garden seats and tiny summer-houses were dotted about temptingly.

Her companion shook her head.

'Ah, as for that I should be sorry to answer. The winter is not long here, but it comes sharply and suddenly. Of late years we have never risked meeting it here, for grandmamma could not stand cold now.'

'It is nearly a month since I came,' said the first speaker again. 'It does not seem nearly so long to me. You don't know how I have looked forward to coming, Modeste. And I have enjoyed it *so* much.'

'Not more than we have enjoyed having you. Maurice says you must certainly come to us every year—it is one of the nice things in England that girls can pay visits to their friends in this way—at least till you are married.'

'Then you may look forward to having a long series of visits from me,' said Aveline, laughing. 'I shall never marry, Modeste. I am twenty-three now, and I think I can tell.'

Young Madame de Bois-Hubert looked sorry.

'I hope you will,' she said. 'It is so sad not to be married—at least so we think. In England it is not thought quite the same.'

'It would appear so, certainly,' said Aveline. 'So many women are never married. But they don't all look as if it was

because they had never cared to marry,' she went on with a little laugh. 'It seems badly managed somehow—I *feel* as if I should manage better if I were a mother with daughters; but perhaps I should be just as puzzled as other people. I am almost like a mother as it is—with Leo. I do so hope that nothing will ever make her unhappy.'

'There is no fear,' said Modeste, with a little hesitation, 'of your mother wishing her to marry any one she does not care for.'

'Leo would not do it. She has more decision of character than I have. And besides—no, I think poor mamma has left off making plans. It makes me sorry to think that I shall probably always be a disappointment to her. We must hope things will go better with Leonora.'

'But you said, dear Aveline, that you had not been unhappy all this time—that you felt you were helping your father and mother?'

'Yes,' said Miss Verney, 'I think so—I hope so. Things have been better. But I was glad to come away from home for a little. Poor mamma was rather upset lately when Sir Francis Ayrton died, and people began talking of the splendid fortune his son had come into, and how handsome the new Lady Ayrton is, and all that kind of talk.'

'Horrible people,' said Modeste. 'You don't mean she—your mother—wishes you had married him?'

'I don't know really,' said Aveline. 'I don't, and that is of more consequence. No—twenty times over better be an old maid than marry a man like that. But he hasn't turned out so badly since his marriage; his wife keeps him in very good order, they say. I am very glad of it, for poor Lady Ayrton's sake.'

'He would have killed *you*,' said Madame de Bois-Hubert. 'You could not have managed him.'

'No,' said Aveline, 'I don't think I could. I have not much strength of character, Modeste. I fear I have given several people reason to despise me; that is the sorest feeling I ever have,' she added, with a look in her eyes that her friend could not bear to see.

'Aveline, you are never to say that. It is not so. No one who knows you could dream of despising you. You are morbid on that point,' said Modeste, earnestly.

'Well, we won't discuss it,' said Aveline, lightly. 'You—all of you—are too good to me. No one ever cheers me as you do, and I owe you more than I can tell.'

They had wandered down among the trees by now, and had seated themselves on one of the benches. The sweet soft air came fluttering gently through the branches; the indescribable pathos of the autumn was already beginning to be perceptible.

'I suppose,' said Miss Verney, 'glancing upwards at the old house, 'this place has changed very little for—how long? A century or two at least?'

'It was partly destroyed in the Revolution,' said Modeste; 'but it was restored exactly as it had been. So I suppose it looks the same. But strange scenes must have passed here, nevertheless.'

'And old people have died, and young ones grown into their places; happy brides like you, Modeste, have come here, and little babies have been born, and men and women have been joyful and sorrowful—and the birds go on singing, and the wind whispers through the trees just the same—just the same. Isn't everything strange in this world?' said Aveline, dreamily.

Modeste smiled indulgently. Her friend's fancies made her smile a little sometimes.

'I don't know,' she said. 'Things are as they were meant to be, I suppose. The world is a very nice place, I think. Only I do feel sometimes almost ashamed to be so happy, for I don't deserve it, and so many others better than I are not so.'

'Dear little Modeste,' said Aveline, 'you do deserve prosperity, for it never makes you selfish.'

At that moment a step was heard coming along the gravel. It was Modeste's husband.

'What are you two young ladies so busy talking about?' he said. 'Have you not yet completed all the confidences accumulated since you were last together?'

His tone was light and rallying. But his wife knew him so well that she detected traces of something unusual, something to be told, beneath his trifling words. She glanced up inquiringly, but so that Aveline could not perceive the question in her eyes. Monsieur de Bois-Hubert nodded his head slightly.

'Yes—another letter,' he whispered, so low that but for the motion of his lips Modeste could scarcely have understood the words.

'The letters have just come—none for you, mademoiselle,' he said, addressing Aveline. 'But Madame de Boncœur is quite in a flutter. An old friend is to arrive here to-day, on his way from London to somewhere or other—Madrid, I think. A compatriot of yours, mademoiselle?'

'An Englishman!' exclaimed Aveline—the word Madrid had already caught her attention.

'Exactly. And, by-the-by, an old acquaintance of yours too, Monsieur Hereward. You knew him, of course, when your family was in Paris?'

'Yes,' said Aveline, calmly, but very gravely—'If only I had known it before, even yesterday,' she said to herself, 'I would have managed to go. But as it is, I must stay and bear it. It would be undignified to do otherwise. But it is very hard. I had so hoped never to see him again. Oh, I do trust they suspect nothing.'

'Monsieur Hereward,' said Modeste. 'Ah, bonne maman will be very pleased and quite excited. He has always promised to pay us a visit some day, *en passant*, but till now he has never been able to do so, though he dined with us last winter in Paris one day.'

'I did not know you had ever seen him since—since that time in Paris,' said Aveline.

She was very pale by this time; her lips even were white. But she was unconscious of this, and the young husband and wife were far too wise to seem to notice it.

'Oh, yes,' said Modeste, lightly, 'we have never lost sight of him. He is a very steady friend. He was always so pleased to hear of you from us. Oh, dear me, it is getting chilly. Let us go in, Aveline. I do hope *déjeuner* is nearly ready.'

Aveline rose, and Modeste drew her friend's arm within her own.

'Does—will not Mr. Hereward be surprised to see me here?' said Aveline.

'Oh, no, bonne maman has very likely told him you were here. She writes to him often. You must arrange a shooting party for him, Maurice,' she went on, 'if he stays over to-morrow.'

Madame de Bonceur met them on the *perron*. She was in high spirits, but addressed herself chiefly to her granddaughter.

'Modeste,' she said; 'there are some letters I want you to help me to write before the postman calls. I don't want to be busy when Monsieur Hereward arrives. Aveline, my dear, you will excuse us for an hour or two?'

'Of course, dear madame,' said Aveline, only too glad to be alone. 'I am always happy in the garden. And to-day is so lovely.'

She quickly made a little plan in her head of how she would stay out till late, and manage to avoid meeting the expected guest till they were all together assembled in the drawing-room before dinner.

'It will not be so difficult after the first meeting,' she thought.

And *déjeuner* over, Aveline strolled off further than the garden. She made her way into the woods, penetrating as far as she dared without risk of losing her way.

'I should not like a hue and cry after me. That would be anything but desirable,' she said to herself with a smile.

The woods were very charming this afternoon. Aveline found a pleasant seat on some felled trees, and there she established herself, nominally to read, in reality to think. But in spite of herself her thoughts were less consequent than usual. The prospect of seeing Nigel again had brought with it a certain excitement, notwithstanding the painful shrinking with which she anticipated it. She was so young still, and life might have been so fair—so very fair for her!

'But I had begun to think of it as all in the far past,' she thought. 'It is hard to have the old pain forced upon me—the dreadful feeling of mortification above all.'

A little bird fluttered down from a branch hard by. It was so tame, for these woods were seldom visited, that it hopped up fearlessly close to Aveline, and seemed to glance at her sympathetically with its bright, sparkling eyes. All animals loved the girl, she was so gentle and quiet. She smiled at the little creature, and watched it with interest.

'Hush!' she whispered involuntarily, as a step, crunching the already fallen leaves, sounded near, 'hush!—'They will frighten the poor little bird,' she added to herself under her breath, and she glanced up, expecting to see some woodman or peasant-boy trudging homewards in his sabots.

But a sudden cry escaped her; she started up, and stood as if turned to stone when the intruder met her view. It was Nigel Hereward!

'Mr. Hereward!' she exclaimed.

'Oh, Miss Verney,' he said, 'I have had such a hunt to find you. They told me you were sure to be somewhere in the grounds near the house—that you never went further.' He paused, seemingly quite out of breath.

'And they have been uneasy about me,' she said. 'I am so

sorry. It was thoughtless of me. I will go back at once,' and she was hastening off when Mr. Hereward arrested her by his words.

'Miss Verney,' he said rather ruefully, 'I wish you would give your pity to those who deserve it. Mesdames, our amiable châtelaines, are not in the least uneasy about you. But I—am very much out of breath. Will you not allow me five minutes' grace to recover myself?' and he seemed as if he would seat himself on the tree she had just quitted, and looked up at her half anxiously, half comically.

'Five hours, if you like,' said Aveline, with a slight and rather forced laugh, 'only I must go in. It is later than I thought.'

'What a story!' said the young man to himself. 'She wants to escape from a *tête-à-tête*, that is the truth. What if I am wrong after all! what if that child was wrong!'

And the rueful predominated over the comical as he rose slowly again.

'I cannot let you go home alone, seeing that I came on purpose to find you,' he said seriously.

Aveline flushed crimson.

'I am so sorry. I never thought of it,' she said penitently. 'I have never even thanked you for coming to fetch me. Just as you arrived! But I do think Madame de Boncœur or Modeste might have sent one of the servants.'

'Yes,' said Nigel, curtly, 'I think so too, if they had sent any one. But they did not. I came of my own accord. And you have not only not thanked me, you have not even shaken hands with me. And it is sixteen months and a fortnight, and as nearly as possible twenty-two hours since we met. The last time I saw you was one afternoon the April before last, at the Ayrtons' hotel, when I told you I was going away.'

He looked at her as he spoke. He was leaning against a tree.

'Won't you sit down again for two minutes?' he said. 'You might do as much as that for me, surely.'

Aveline sat down. She was very pale now.

'Aveline,' he began, speaking quietly, with the quiet that comes of extreme self-restraint, 'you are too good to play with me or to fence with me. If I spoke for an hour it would be no use, I know, if—if you feel it can't be. But I have come here on purpose—if you reject me I shall go away this afternoon. Do you think, do you think you can care for me enough to marry me dear?'

Aveline raised her face. It was bathed in tears.

'Are you in earnest? Is it not out of pity?' she said. 'I thought you despised me.'

'Who told you so?' he said almost fiercely.

'Mamma,' replied Aveline, impulsively. 'She said I had shown you I cared for you, and that you pitied me, and thought me—oh, I can't say it clearly, but you can understand. She said I was a fool, and that you had seen too many girls to think seriously of things like that. She said I should have known you were not thinking of marrying, and—'

'Then you did care for me,' he interrupted, forgetting all the rest. 'And do you still? Can you forgive me if I made you suffer? I did not mean it. I thought I could bear it *myself*, and that you would not care. I thought your mother would never have thrown us together so much had she not been sure you were in no danger of caring.'

'And what has made you think otherwise now?' she said, smiling a little, a very little, through her tears.

He smiled too.

'Never mind that just now,' he said. He was kneeling beside her now, so that he could see the sweet blue eyes which no longer evaded his gaze. 'Say it, dear, say that you care for me. I don't mind if it is not as much as I care for you. It could not be.'

'I don't need to say it,' she whispered. 'And that isn't true, it *is* as much. It must be, for I could not care for you more than I do, Nigel.'

The soft autumn breezes fluttered and murmured through the trees, a faint rustling among the dry leaves made Aveline look up. The little bird was there again. She touched Nigel gently.

'He has come to wish us good luck,' she said softly.

And in a little while Nigel explained it all to her.

'Your mother was right so far,' he said. 'I could not dream of marrying. I was too poor. But beyond that, how dared—No, she is your mother, and we are going to be so happy we can forgive it all. It is only within the last week or two that things have changed. I have been to England to see about it all. Sir Francis Ayrton has left me a legacy, which insures comfort if not luxury to us.'

'Oh,' said Aveline, clasping her hands, 'how good of him! Do you think it was partly——' then she stopped and grew crimson again.

'Yes, dear. I think it was partly, greatly for you, though he worded it so as to seem natural. He was good enough to say I had been of service to him. He did not think he would have lived so long—he had been lingering on month after month, not realising how time was going. Had he done so he would have told me, though I don't know that I could have agreed to it, while he lived,' he added. 'I got to know him very well that time at Boulogne,' he went on.

'I heard of that,' said Aveline. 'But—you knew about what I did—what I consented to after I thought that you despised me—'

Nigel placed his finger on her lips. 'Hush, don't say such things,' he said. But she persisted. 'Yes, I must. It was that that made me do it. I thought I was no good, no use in the world. I hated myself. I thought I would try to make them all happier.'

'It was not your fault,' he said hastily.

'Yes, it was,' she repeated sturdily. 'I know it was wrong; my best friends, Modeste and Leo, they helped to show it to me'

'And you undid it—bravely. I know that,' he said; 'Sir Francis told me.'

'And was it by him that you began to think—that I—that I did care?'

'Partly—not altogether. I will tell you now. She does not know herself how much she told me. It was Leo, good little Leo. I called at your house last week, just to find out where you were. Your mother was out. I saw Leo.'

Aveline's eyes sparkled.

'Nigel,' she said, 'that is one thing we may be able to do—to take care of Leo, and prevent her suffering as I have done.'

'My darling!' he exclaimed.

'And what will mamma say?' added Aveline afterwards, when they were making their way home through the woods.

'She will grin and bear it, I suppose,' said Nigel, calmly.

'Better, perhaps, to have me married to a—I suppose you will never be a rich man?—than not at all, she will think,' said Aveline, laughing.

What every one else said—Leonora, Mr. Verney, Madame de Boncoeur and 'her children,' as she called her little family group in the kindly French way—there will be no difficulty in imagining.

At the Sign of the Ship.

THERE seems reason to fear that a Virgin will presently be sacrificed by a company of infuriated novelists, as Jodelle and his friends, when a play was accepted, offered a goat to Dionysus. For some reason the novelists are very self-conscious at this moment, and keep inquiring into the health, and feeling the pulse of the Muse of Romance, with an interest shared by the general public. Mr. Rider Haggard has been deciding, in the *Contemporary Review*, that fiction is in a bad way, and he speaks of some American writers and of M. Zola in a style which is almost a *casus belli*. On the other side of the Atlantic, Mr. Boyes, in the *Forum*, also thinks that fiction is in a valetudinarian state. One point on which Mr. Haggard and Mr. Boyes agree is in holding that blushing Maidenhood is the real cause of distress. Mr. Haggard says that novelists are ever in their great task-mistress's eye, and that *her* name is the Young Person. Mr. Boyes also declares that the American Young Girl is the 'Iron Madonna' of fiction, and crushes romancers in her ruthless embrace. Both evidently mean that novelists would work better, and with more freedom, if the standard of popularity were not set by girls, and by notions of what girls may read. Thus, that once bewitching syren, the fair (or dark) maiden of eighteen, the heroine of so many thousand tales, is becoming a kind of Medusa, who petrifies her intrepid chronicler, the novelist. Therefore it is that the Police should keep their eyes on novelists, who, if not carefully watched, are likely enough to immolate a maiden victim to the Muse.

* * *

I confess I don't see what novelists have to complain of. I only wish young girls would read *my* works—*my* little *excursus* on the *Evolution of Ritual*, or *my* favourite study, *The Modification of Cannibalism by Cookery*. But the Young Girl

neglects these edifying essays, and they 'wilt' on the dusty shelves. To be read by Young Girls should be an author's joy. M. Renan will admit this; M. Renan, who (though elderly) sighs to be a prayer-book, or other work of devotion, in a well-gloved hand. Let us hope that in *Le Paradis des Gens de Lettres* (which Charles Asselineau beheld in a vision) M. Renan may have this good fortune, and may become an illuminated missal turned over by fair fingers in church, and bound in mosaic of morocco. This is the very fate which these ungallant romancers are protesting against. I once bought an old coloured print at Oxford, in which a young girl of great beauty was represented at her mirror, while an old Duenna produced a romance from under the maiden's pillow, and scolded furiously. Were it not a happy thing to supply the literature thus 'dreamed upon'—like bride-cake—by the fair? Yet novelists rise up against it, as if Tannhäuser had wearied of the sweet captivity in the Hill of Hörsel; or if Merlin had been bored within the four walls of the hollow tower, where lovely Vivien visited him. Fielding was flattered, I am sure, by the preference of Lydia Languish, nor did the fear of offending Miss Languish—a young girl—at all check him in the delineation of Thomas Jones.

* * *

Novelists protest in vain. Their principal public, the chief of their admirers, will always be young girls. Mr. Haggard, to be sure, also conciliated boys: *virginibus puerisque cantat*. There was a time, about 1630, when 'young sparkish girls' were the chief public of William Shakspear, who is described, by a Puritan of that time, as 'creeping into the women's wardrobes.' If the novelist really feels trammelled by the youth of his admirers, he must either induce men to read something out of newspapers, or he must boldly take his chance, and say his say, and be the martyr of the circulating libraries. Ladies appear to have this courage, and I have seen, of late, much written by ladies for ladies, in which the feelings of the Young Person were no kind of check on a large treatment of human nature. The truth is that novelists are too modest. We have a very good set of romancers in England at this hour, and they represent well every form of fiction, from Mr. Meredith's epigram and observation to Mr. Besant's fairy tales of the East End and Mr. Stevenson's stories of undiscovered isles, and of the Highlands before they were discovered, by Sir Walter Scott. Then there is Mrs.

Oliphant with her astonishing vision of a country which, let us hope, none of us may discover for ourselves—the dark dominion where Hope is left behind, and the sound of the Divine Name is a torment.

* * *

THE RESTORATION OF ROMANCE.

(To H. R. H. and R. L. S.)

King Romance was wounded deep,
 All his knights were dead and gone,
 All his Court was fallen on sleep,
 In a vale of Avalon !
Nay, men said, he will not come,
Any night or any morn.
Nay, his puissant voice is dumb,
Silent his enchanted horn !

King Romance was forfeited,
 Banished from his Royal home,
 With a price upon his head,
 Driven with sylvan folk to roam.
King Romance is fallen, banned,
Cried his foe-men overbold,
Broken is the wizard wand,
All the stories have been told !

Then you came from South and North,
 From Tugela, from the Tweed,
 Blazoned his achievements forth,
 King Romance is come indeed !
 All his foes are overthrown,
 All their wares cast out in scorn,
 King Romance hath won his own,
 And the lands where he was born !

Now he sways with wand of gold
 Realms that honoured him of yore.
 Hills Dalgetty roamed of old,
 Valleys of enchanted Kôr :
 Waves his sceptre o'er the isles,
 Claims the pirates' treasures,
 Rules innumerable miles
 Of the siren-haunted seas !

Elfin folk of coast and cave,
 Laud him in the woven dance,
 All the tribes of wold and wave
 Bow the knee to King Romance !
 Wand'ring voices Chaucer knew
 On the mountain and the main,
 Cry the haunted forest through,
King Romance has come again!

* * *

There are persons who love not that publishing custom of inserting advertisements of books between the covers of a new volume. 'Tis true this budget doth a little unseemly swell the proportions of a maiden tome, yet I would not be prompt to censure a custom somewhat laudable, if any will but reflect on it. For a book should not be published, as it is not written, for mere present delight, and the convenience of the Reader. It will outlive his brief day, if it have merit, and Fortune be its friend, nor will a later age fail to be instructed by these advertisements which now we upbraid as superfluous. There came of late into my hands (I purchased it, indeed, at a stall in Keswick) the old Translation of Madame de Lafayette's romance, *La Princesse de Clèves*. (A Paris. Chez Claude Barbin, 1678. 4 tom., en 2 vol.) In English the novel hath for name,

THE
 PRINCESS
 OF
 C L E V E S
 The Most Famed
 ROMANCE

Written in *French* by the greatest Wits of *France*.

Rendered into *English* by a Person of Quality,
 At the request of some Friends.

(*à la Sphère*)

L O N D O N

Printed for R. Bentley and M. Magnes, in Russel-Street,
 in Covent Garden, 1679

The Translation is from a hand more dexterous than one who now translates, or may I say traduces? the romances of M. Gustave Flaubert, that famed wit of France. But what more takes me than the novel itself is the number of advertisements, wherein we learn how our grandmothers read, and what books the ingenious Mr. Bentley put forth, 'tis now two centuries since.

Mr. Bentley had risked his capital at that season on '*Nostradamus*, his Prophesies,' and '*The Triumphs of God's Revenge against the crying and execrable Sin of wilful and premeditated Murders*.' From this title I gather that the author had no such aversion to common manslaughter, as to killing of set purpose. 'Tis, indeed, no inconsiderable distinction in morality, though I had as lief be shot of malice aforethought, for my poor part, as be killed by one in a moment of passion and beyond himself. Mr. Bentley, moreover, did not disdain to publish the dramas of Madam Beane: she, I think, can be no other than that applauded Afra, 'who fairly puts all characters to bed.' '*Tartuff*; or, the French Puritan,' also engaged Mr. Bentley's types, and many plays of Mr. Lee and '*Mr. Witherly*.' The spelling is not mine, Mr. Quarterly Reviewer. I do but copy it from Mr. Bentley's advertisement. Here '*Plato's Apologie of Socrates*' rubs shoulders with '*Covent-Garden Drollery*', and '*the Happy Slave Compleat*' neighbours '*The Unfortunate Hero*.' I hope, egad, the *Hero* was '*compleat*', though '*Unfortunate*', but perchance his very misfortune was no more than this, to resemble '*Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man*.' One comedy put forth by Mr. Bentley I commend to my censurers, 'tis *The Fool turned Critique*; no very astonishing metamorphosis, there will be some to say. '*Calisto*; or, the Chast Nymph. A Masque,' represented a lady that had stranger misfortunes, though *Ovid*, sure, must have some hidden Allegory when he tells us she was altered to the guise of a she-bear! The French books in Mr. Bentley's shop were *roguish*, I fear, as Mr. Pepys liked them. Of such is *Galand Escroke*, and a '*Pleasant Novel*', that will remind such as know it of *Le dernier de Monsieur Paul de Kock*.

* * *

There is not much to amuse, and a good deal to dislike, in the scraps from Mr. Thackeray's waste-paper basket called '*Sultan Stork, and other Papers*.' One amusing thing, however, is the reproach which the editor addresses to Messrs. Smith and Elder

for reprinting some of the 'Snob Papers,' rejected by Mr. Thackeray himself. Why, they did it, of course, to prevent people like this editor from doing the same thing. 'I am half sorry that this burlesque should be revived,' says Mr. Swinburne, speaking of a piece attributed, rightly or wrongly, to Mr. Thackeray in his youth. I am whole sorry. Where is the good in publishing such stuff as the verses in this assortment? 'Every careless word' a great man writes, and forgets, or tries to bury, may be dragged out and republished, for whose diversion it is hard to say. There is no harm in the verses, but better are printed, every week, in every penny comic paper. One old article, 'Dickens in France,' a defence of Dickens against Jules Janin, has interesting points. Once more we see how loyal Mr. Thackeray was to his great contemporary, whose battles he fought even in a foreign land. 'Some day the writer meditates a great and splendid review of J. J.'s work,' says Thackeray, but the day never came, and J. J. is a little forgotten by his countrymen, and quite unknown in England. Peace be with him, he was a bookman after all, and wrote *L'Amour des Livres*, and liked Horace.

* * *

Clever people, overeducated for their intellect, and ladies wholly devoid of the sense of humour are now so numerous and powerful, that one hardly dares to confess to admiration of Dickens. He does not make *them* laugh, indeed they are not 'tickled o' the sear.' They will agree with Jules Janin's criticism of Dickens, which I quote in French for their advantage. 'Figurez-vous donc un amas d'inventions puériles, où l'horrible et le niaiseux donnent la main, dans une ronde infernale ; ici passent en riant de bonnes gens si bons qu'ils en sont tout-à-fait bêtes ; plus loin bondissent et blasphèment toutes sortes de bandits, κ.τ.λ., u.s.w., &c. C'est le plus nauséabond mélange,' and so forth. Jules did not, it seems, know English, and had only seen a French adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby*, in which Smike turns out to be Lord Clarendon. Janin could not read English, and English folk 'can't read Dickens.' They prefer Paul Bourget ; prefer the Sahara of *Sapho*, and the endless, endless steppes and *tundras* of the fashionable Tolstoi. Oh England! oh my countrywomen! A day or two since I was in Mr. Bain's shop, and a rough fellow, a carter I think, or porter, came in and asked for 'a book called the *Pickwick Papers*.' One was comforted by that carter.

* * *

Every lover of Thackeray should have (but he can't get it, as the number is limited) Mr. Charles Plumptre Johnson's 'Hints to Collectors of the Original Editions of the Works of William Makepeace Thackeray.' It is a model of a useful piece of bibliography, with much agreeable news about 'outer wrappers,' and warnings against the tricks of trade. An exercise in statistics shows that a complete Thackeray collection may be purchased for about 130*l.* to 150*l.*, though some of the early things are so very scarce that their price is likely to rise, if we do not have war at least, or a revolution, or a very severe Jubilee.

* * *

The following verses are not quite as good as *Kubla Khan*, but their author says they were revealed to her in a dream, in which she saw the dance described, and the incident of the spurs, and composed more or less of the poem. But all dreams do not come through the gateway of horn, and even Covenanters admit that Claverhouse was no Lothario.

THE BALLAD OF CLAVERHOUSE'S SWEETHEART.

Was it my fault, or was it yours,
 That when you danced for men to see,
 Your yellow gown caught in my spurs
 And made a willing slave of me ?
 I know you now, but as it was,
 I loved you long before I knew ;
 I only saw one lady pass
 In all the dance and that was you !

Great Clavers'e looks at her and smiles,
 He thinks that she is fair and his ;
 But did he see her other whiles
 Then he would know whose love she is.
 Ah, let him never see us then,
 He'd surely kill me if he knew,
 I'm only one among his men,
 And thrones were not too good for you.

They say he bears a charmed life,
 The leaden bullet glances by.
 He keeps his life, but ah ! his wife
 He lost her, though he cannot die.

And were he king of Scotland yet
(A gallant soldier is he too !)
And were a queen beside him set,
My sweet, that queen would not be you !

V. H.

* * *

Mr. Brander Matthews has published, in New York, with Mr. Combes, a pretty little collection of 'Ballads on Books.' One misses Martial, Clement Marot, Joseph Boulmier, and doubtless other additions might be suggested. Among the English contributions, the new pieces at least, I like Mr. Arthur J. Munby's *Ex Libris* best, and his 'On an Inscription.' There are a few misprints which destroy both rhyme and reason in the book. Parnell must have written :—

His *roses* nipt in every page,
My poor Anacreon mourns thy rage,

not

His *rose* nipt in every page.

There are some pleasant American contributions from Mr. Clinton Scollard and Mr. Peck, whose poems one has not seen on this side of 'the salt unplumbed estranging sea.'

* * *

The 'Blind Fisherman of Tweedside,' William Rankin, is dead at the age of 64. This remarkable man,—who might have furnished Wordsworth with a subject for his Muse in her more fortunate mood,—lost his sight after an attack of small-pox. Blind as he was, he learned to make fishing-tackle, and even dressed his own flies. With those he caught heavy baskets of trout in the deep and dangerous and much-poached waters of the Tweed near St. Boswell's. He was also an adept in gardening. Like many blind people he was 'free from repining,' and of him, as of Mr. Fawcett, it may be said that 'he did his duty in life like a man.' The dark soft summer nights, so still that only the splash of rising trout breaks the silence, will know him and his one attendant, his dog, no more.

ANDREW LANG.

The 'Donna.'

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